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of Wit & Beauty.*



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SOME FAMOUS WOMEN OF  
WIT AND BEAUTY



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*M<sup>rs</sup> Fitzherbert.*  
*From the Picture by R. Cowray, R.A.*

# SOME FAMOUS WOMEN OF WIT AND BEAUTY

A GEORGIAN GALAXY

BY

JOHN FYVIE✓  
//

*WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS*



LONDON  
ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND COMPANY  
LIMITED

1905

*Third Impression*

IA 482  
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## NOTE

THE first of the following biographical studies originally appeared in the pages of *The Nineteenth Century*, the second in *King and Country*, the third in *The Quarterly Review*, the fourth in *The Anglo-Saxon Review*, the sixth and seventh in *Temple Bar*, and they are now reprinted by the courtesy of the editors of those periodicals. The fifth and eighth are here printed for the first time. The author hopes that they may at least serve as a reminder that superlative beauty, brilliant wit, and lives full of strange happenings, are not the exclusive prerogative of the heroines of fiction.

J. F.



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## THE UNACKNOWLEDGED WIFE OF GEORGE THE FOURTH

THE *Morning Herald* of the 27th of July 1784 presented its readers with the following by no means apparently important piece of Society intelligence :—

A new *constellation* has lately made an appearance in the *fashionable hemisphere* that engages the attention of those whose hearts are susceptible to the power of beauty. The widow of the late Mr. F—h—t has in her train half our young Nobility; as the lady has not, as yet, discovered a partiality for any of her admirers, they are all animated with hopes of success.

Little did the writer of this paragraph, or any of his readers, or even the new beauty herself, imagine what a strange destiny was reserved for her.

Although but twenty-eight years of age, the lady had been twice a widow. She was born in July 1756, and was the youngest daughter of Walter Smythe, Esq. of Brambridge, in Hampshire; who was the second son of Sir John Smythe, Bart., of Eshe Hall, Co. Durham, and Acton Burnell Park,

in Shropshire. Of her earlier days next to nothing is known. The only story on record relating to her childhood appears to be that, being taken by her parents to see Louis the Fifteenth eat his solitary dinner at Versailles, and seeing the King of France pull a chicken to pieces with his fingers, the novelty of the exhibition struck her fancy so forcibly that, regardless of royal etiquette, she burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. Happily the royal attention, thus directed to her, had no worse consequences than the offer of a dish of sugar-plums, which the King sent her by one of his courtiers. In 1775, at the age of nineteen, she was married to Edward Weld, Esq. of Lulworth Castle, Dorsetshire. This gentleman died before the end of the same year. In 1778 she was again married, this time to Thomas Fitzherbert, Esq. of Swynnerton, Staffordshire, who, three years later, left her again a widow, with a jointure of £2000 a year. She then took up her residence in a house on Richmond Hill, where she attracted, as the notice in the *Morning Herald* testifies, no small degree of general admiration.

Amongst the most ardent of her admirers was George, Prince of Wales, then a handsome and fascinating, but already dissipated young man of

twenty-two, six years the lady's junior. For some time Mrs. Fitzherbert seems to have successfully repelled the Prince's advances; but, says her relative, Lord Stourton, she was at length subjected to a species of attack so unprecedented and alarming that her resolution was shaken, and she was induced to take the first step which ultimately led to that union which the Prince so ardently desired, and for the sake of which he appeared ready to run any conceivable risk. One day, Lord Stourton informs us:—

Keit, the surgeon, Lord Onslow, Lord Southampton, and Mr. Edward Bouverie arrived at her house in the utmost consternation, informing her that the life of the Prince was in imminent danger—that he had stabbed himself—and that only *her* immediate presence would save him. She resisted all their importunities, saying that nothing should induce her to enter Carlton House. She was afterwards brought to share in the alarm, but still, fearful of some stratagem derogatory to her reputation, insisted upon some lady of high character accompanying her as an indispensable condition. The Duchess of Devonshire was selected. They four drove from Park Street to Devonshire House, and took her along with them. She found the Prince pale, and covered with blood. The sight so overpowered her faculties that she was deprived almost of all consciousness. The Prince told her that nothing would induce him to live unless she promised to become his wife, and permitted him to put a ring round her finger. I believe a ring from the hand of the Duchess of Devonshire

was used upon the occasion, and not one of his own. Mrs. Fitzherbert, being asked by me whether she did not believe that some trick had been practised, and that it was not really the blood of His Royal Highness, answered in the negative, and said she had frequently seen the scar, and that some brandy and water was near his bedside when she was called to him on the day he had wounded himself.<sup>1</sup>

At the conclusion of this extraordinary scene Mrs. Fitzherbert went home; and next day, regretting what she had been persuaded to do, she sent a letter of protest to Lord Southampton and left the country. For a time she travelled about in France and Switzerland, and made a stay of some length in Holland, where she lived on terms of intimacy with the Stadtholder and his family. It was one of life's little ironies that just at the time of her intimacy with this family the Princess of Orange was being negotiated for as a wife for the Prince of Wales, and she was subjected to a great deal of questioning as to what she knew of his character. The Prince, meanwhile, as we learn from Lord Holland, made no secret of his passion and his despair at her leaving England for the Continent. He went

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Mrs. Fitzherbert, with an account of her Marriage with H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, afterwards King George the Fourth, 1856, pp. 118-19.*

down more than once to St. Anne's to talk with Fox and Mrs. Armitstead on the subject, and this lady describes him as crying by the hour, and testifying to the sincerity, or at any rate the violence, of his passion in the most extravagant way—by rolling on the floor, striking his forehead, tearing his hair, and swearing that he would abandon the country, forgo the crown, sell his jewels and plate, and scrape together a competence wherewith to fly with the object of his affections to America. At the same time, he despatched courier after courier with letters to his inamorata, until she was induced first to promise that at least she would not marry any other person, and then, after being assured that his father would connive at their union, that she would marry him; ‘on conditions,’ says Lord Stourton, ‘which satisfied her conscience, though she could have no legal claim to be the wife of the Prince.’ She accordingly returned to England in December 1785, and on the 21st of that month was married to the Prince of Wales in her own drawing-room, by a Protestant clergyman, in the presence of her uncle, Harry Errington, and her brother, Jack Smythe. The certificate of this marriage, Lord Stourton assures us, was in the handwriting of

the Prince of Wales, and is still preserved ; although, some time afterwards, at the earnest request of the parties, Mrs. Fitzherbert cut off the names of the witnesses, in order to save them from the possible penalties of the law.

For more than a year all went merry as a marriage-bell. Of course the air was alive with rumours. Not only did the decorous newspapers, when chronicling His Royal Highness's promenades at Brighton and elsewhere, point out that 'Mrs. F——' was one of his inseparable companions, but during 1786 and 1787 the matter was the subject of numerous none-too-delicate caricatures. In the last-named year, however, the little rift within the lute began to show itself. The Prince's finances were hopelessly embarrassed, and were brought formally under the notice of Parliament. During one of the discussions on this question, Mr. Rolle, a country member, solemnly deprecated any debate on matters that 'went immediately to affect our Constitution in Church and State.' The allusion was extremely vague, but everybody understood it to refer to the current reports that a marriage had been solemnised between the heir to the throne and a lady of the Roman Catholic faith. The reports outside the House were couched in no such ambiguous terms ;

and Horne Tooke, in one of his pamphlets, had gone so far as to describe Mrs. Fitzherbert as, 'both legally, really, worthily, and happily for this country, Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales.' In order to understand the consternation occasioned by this announcement, it is necessary to remember that by the Statute of William and Mary, commonly called the Bill of Rights, 'every person who shall marry a Papist shall be excluded and for ever be incapable to inherit the crown of this realm.' And although it would undoubtedly have been held that the Royal Marriage Act of 1772, which rendered null and void any marriage contracted by any descendant of George the Second who should be under the age of twenty-five, without the previous consent of the King, or a twelvemonth's notice to the Privy Council, would have degraded any such alleged marriage into a mere insignificant ceremony, yet jurists were of opinion that this would by no means have exempted the Prince from the forfeiture of the crown, seeing that the nullity of an illegal transaction does not do away with the penalty attached to the performance of the act. The Prince was no doubt genuinely alarmed at the danger which threatened him: he was also desperately in want of money. His friend Fox was

consequently instructed to contradict the report of the marriage in the fullest and most unqualified terms. He therefore informed the House that it was a miserable calumny, a low, malicious falsehood, a monstrous invention. And when Mr. Rolle persistently observed that they all knew there was an Act of Parliament forbidding such a marriage, but that there were ways in which the law, to the minds of some persons, might have been satisfactorily evaded, Fox replied that he did not deny the calumny in question merely with regard to certain existing laws, but that he denied it *in toto*—in point of fact as well as of law. Moreover, on being asked if he stated this on authority, he declared that he did. On the strength of this emphatic assurance, the Prince received an addition of £10,000 a year to his income out of the Civil List, a sum of £161,000 from the same source for the discharge of his debts, and a further £20,000 on account of the works at Carlton House. Nobody has ever supposed that Fox made these assertions without specific instructions from the Prince, and in 1854 Lord Holland published certain letters tending to show how Fox was deceived.

Of course Mrs. Fitzherbert was deeply aggrieved. Lord Stourton says that, at the time,

Mrs. Fitzherbert was on a visit with the Hon. Mrs. Butler, her friend and relative, and at whose house the Prince frequently met Mrs. Fitzherbert. The Prince called the morning after the denial of the marriage in the House of Commons by Mr. Fox. He went up to Mrs. Fitzherbert, and, taking hold of both her hands, and caressing her, said, 'Only conceive, Maria, what Fox did yesterday. He went down to the House and denied that you and I were man and wife! Did you ever hear of such a thing?' Mrs. Fitzherbert made no reply, but changed countenance and turned pale.<sup>1</sup>

She resolved to break with the Prince; but he assured her that Fox's statement was not authorised by him, and promised her that it should be publicly contradicted. It was a promise easier to make than to carry out. Fox could not be expected to eat his own words; and the Prince turned to Mr. (afterwards Lord) Grey. Lord Holland relates that—after George the Fourth's death—Lord Grey assured him that the Prince, after much preamble and pacing in a hurried manner about the room, exclaimed, 'Charles certainly went too far last night! You, my dear Grey, shall explain it.' And then, in distinct terms, though with prodigious agitation, owned that a ceremony had taken place. Grey diplomatically declined the office of spokesman; and, after some exclamations of annoyance, the

<sup>1</sup> Langdale, *op. cit.*, pp. 29, 30.

Prince said, 'Well, then, Sheridan must say something.' Sheridan accordingly took an early opportunity of commending the House for its delicate forbearance in not making an inquiry or putting questions to the Prince on the subject of the reported marriage, and then went on to observe that 'he must take the liberty of saying, however some might think it a subordinate consideration, that there was another person entitled, in every delicate and honourable mind, to the same attention; one whom he would not otherwise venture to describe or allude to but by saying it was a name which malice or ignorance alone could attempt to injure, and whose character and conduct claimed and were entitled to the truest respect.'<sup>1</sup> If these words meant anything, they meant that Mrs. Fitzherbert was not the Prince's mistress, but his wife. But after this mystification the House allowed the matter to drop; and on the 30th of April we find the Prince writing to Fox: 'I feel more comfortable by Sheridan and Grey's account of what has passed to-day.'

In 1788 Mrs. Fitzherbert moved into a house in Pall Mall which had a private entrance into the grounds of Carlton House. Rumour, of course,

<sup>1</sup> Moore's *Life of Sheridan*, vol. i. ch. x.

was still busy ; and on the 10th of October of that year the *Morning Post* was courageous enough to publish the following inquiry :—

A QUESTION.—What is the reason that Mrs. Fitzherbert, who is a lady of fortune and fashion, never appears at Court ? She is visited by *some* ladies of high rank—has been in public with them—and yet never goes to the Drawing Rooms at St. James's. This question is sent for publication by a person who pays no regard to the idle reports of the day, and wishes to have the mystery cleared up.

It is needless to say that this candid inquirer never received any answer ; and the public was obliged to draw its own conclusions from the fact that, although the lady in question never appeared at Court, yet, wherever else the Prince of Wales might happen to be, there was Mrs. Fitzherbert also. It is not to be supposed, however, that the Prince's conduct was altogether without divagations. Lord Malmesbury notes in his diary in 1792, for instance, that Colonel Leger tells him the Prince has been living with Mrs. Crouch, the beautiful actress, and that Mrs. Fitzherbert piqued him by treating this with ridicule and coquetting on her side, with the result that his vanity was hurt, and he was brought back, more under her influence than ever. Not that, even when most under her

influence, the Heir-Apparent was quite all that might be desired as a domestic companion, as the following extract from another diarist of the period, Mr. Thomas Raikes, may be sufficient to show :—

He was young, impetuous, and very boisterous in his character, and very much addicted to the pleasures of the table. It was the fashion in those days to drink very hard, and Mrs. Fitzherbert never retired to rest till her royal spouse came home. But I have heard the late Duke of York say that often, when she heard the Prince and his drunken companions on the staircase, she would seek a refuge from their presence under the sofa, when the Prince, finding the drawing-room deserted, would draw his sword in joke, and, searching about the room, would at last draw forth the trembling victim from her place of concealment.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most unaccountable features in the whole story is the kind and respectful treatment which Mrs. Fitzherbert seems to have invariably received at the hands of almost all the other members of the Royal Family. That the rank and file of London Society apparently thought none the worse of a lady in her equivocal position, but evinced towards her, as Raikes says, ‘that *nuance* of respect which tacitly acknowledged her elevated position,’ may of course be attributed to the desire of paying court to the Heir-Apparent. The friendship

<sup>1</sup> *A Portion of the Journal kept by Thomas Raikes, Esq., from 1831 to 1847.* New ed. 1858 ; vol. ii. pp. 29, 30.

between her and the Dukes of York and Sussex and other members of the Royal Family may perhaps, though not so conclusively, be accounted for in the same way. But that the strait-laced Queen, and the moral, decorous, strictly Protestant, and most autocratic King should have uniformly treated her, as they appear to have done, not only with kindness and respect, but even with tenderness and affection, is unintelligible except on the supposition that they regarded her as morally their son's wife. And, even in that case, one important point is still left unaccounted for. George the Third was peculiarly sensitive to *mésalliances* in the Royal blood, as he chose to consider the marriage of any of his relatives to any of his non-royal subjects. The Royal Marriage Act of 1772<sup>1</sup> had originated in his dis-

<sup>1</sup> This Act was highly unpopular with the public, who regarded it as not only intolerably insulting to British birth and beauty, but as violating one of the first laws of our being. It gave rise to numerous *jeux d'esprit*, of which the following is a favourable specimen :—

#### THE ROYAL MARRIAGE ACT.

Says Dick to Tom, ' This Act appears  
The oddest thing alive ;  
To take the crown at eighteen years,  
The wife at twenty-five.

The thing a puzzle must remain ;  
For as old Dowdeswell said,  
" So early if one's fit to reign  
One must be fit to wed." "

pleasure at the marriages of two of his brothers—that of the Duke of Cumberland with Mrs. Horton, Lord Irnham's daughter, and that of the Duke of Gloucester with the Dowager Countess Waldegrave. And his complaisance towards Mrs. Fitzherbert, who, besides being a Papist, was the daughter of a mere country gentleman of no particular rank or influence, is therefore doubly remarkable. Mrs. Fitzherbert, in fact, appears to have been commonly regarded, both by the Royal Family and the general public, if not quite as the Heir-Apparent's wife, yet as united to him by a solemn ceremony substituted in place of a legal marriage; and she received in all companies the consideration and respect which the sanctity of such a relationship was calculated to inspire. Sir William Wraxall says in his *Posthumous Memoirs* that about 1789 her future destiny formed an object of general curiosity. What would she become, it was asked, under the approaching Regency? Many persons believed that as soon as the Prince was free of certain existing restrictions he would confer upon her a very high rank in the peerage; although Wraxall, while remembering that

---

Says Tom to Dick, 'The man's a fool,  
Or knows no rubs of life;  
Good friend, 'tis easier far to rule  
A kingdom than a wife!'

George the first had made one of his mistresses Duchess of Kendal, and another Countess of Darlington, and that George the Second had created Madame de Walmoden Countess of Yarmouth, doubted whether any Minister in 1789 would have advised or sanctioned the adoption by the Regent of a similar measure.<sup>1</sup> We now know, however, on the authority of Lord Stourton, that, at a later date, Fox did propose to have the rank of Duchess conferred on her, as the price of her reconciliation with him, and that she refused the title on the ground that she did not wish to be regarded as another Duchess of Kendal. On the whole, she seems to have lived happily enough with the Prince up to the time of his marriage with Caroline of Brunswick in 1798, when she retired with an annuity of £6000 a year.

The unhappy marriage with the Princess Caroline was, according to Lord Holland, promoted by Lady Jersey and Lady Harcourt with a view of counter-acting the influence of Mrs. Fitzherbert. That the Prince was, from first to last, strongly averse to it is abundantly clear. A letter written in 1836

<sup>1</sup> *The Historical and Posthumous Memoirs of Sir Nathaniel William Wrazall*, ed. by H. B. Wheatley, F.S.A., 1884, vol. v. p. 294.

by John, Duke of Bedford, shows how he nerved himself to go through the ordeal :—

My brother [writes the Duke] was one of the two unmarried Dukes who supported the Prince at the ceremony, and he had need of his support; for my brother told me the Prince was so drunk that he could scarcely support him from falling. He told my brother that he had drunk several glasses of brandy to enable him to go through the ceremony. There is no doubt but it was a *compulsory* marriage.<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt, as the Duke says, that great pressure was brought to bear upon the Prince to bring about this marriage; but what finally decided him to take the plunge was, once again, want of money. He was always in pecuniary difficulty. The Duke of Wellington knew that on one occasion Mrs. Fitzherbert had been obliged to borrow money to pay for the Prince's post-horses to take him to Newmarket.<sup>2</sup> He himself acknowledged to Lord Malmesbury, in 1792, that his debts then amounted to £370,000, and that he had recently had several executions in his house.<sup>3</sup> And in Huish's *Memoirs of George the Fourth* there is a curious story of the pawning of the State jewels

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of the Whig Party during my time*, by Henry Richard, Lord Holland, vol. ii. 1854, pp. 122-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Grenville Memoirs*. New edition, 1888, vol. ii. p. 194.

<sup>3</sup> *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury*, 1844, vol. ii. p. 450.

in order to save Mrs. Fitzherbert from being arrested for a debt of £1825.<sup>1</sup> More money the Prince must have, and he consented to marry Caroline when he was assured that by so doing his actual income, exclusive of the sum set apart for the payment of his debts, should be raised to £100,000 a year. It was not the first time that his character was sacrificed to his embarrassments. Fox's formal denial, eight years previously, that any marriage ceremony had taken place with Mrs. Fitzherbert does not appear to have entirely removed all apprehensions on the subject. Sir William Wraxall says in his *Memoirs* :—

I know that Dr. Moore, then Archbishop of Canterbury, when reading the matrimonial service in the Chapel Royal, gave unequivocal proofs of his apprehension that some engagement of a moral or religious nature antecedently contracted by the Prince might form a bar to the union which he was about to celebrate; for when he came to the words relative to 'any person knowing of a lawful impediment,' he laid down the book and looked earnestly for a second or two at the King, as well as at the royal bridegroom. The latter was much affected, and shed tears. Not content with this tacit allusion to the report, the Archbishop twice repeated the passage in which the Prince engages to live from that time in nuptial fidelity with his consort.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of George IV.*, by Robert Huish, vol. i. p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> Wraxall, *op. cit.*, vol. v. p. 391.

The last-mentioned fact Wraxall says he had from the Duke and Duchess of Dorset, and the former fact from the Dowager Duchess of Rutland, all of whom were present at the ceremony. It is one of the many curious anomalies in this strange story that, in spite of the Prince's public marriage to the Princess Caroline, the belief in the sanctity of his previous private marriage still enabled Mrs. Fitzherbert to maintain her position in London society, and to draw all the fashionable world, including the Royal Dukes, to her parties. And it is even more strange that when, no long time after, the Prince desired to return to her, several members of the Royal Family, male and female, urged her to agree to a reconciliation. She agreed to abide by the decision of the Pope on the matter; and an envoy was sent to Rome to obtain his opinion. Her marriage with the Prince was held to be perfectly valid, both as a contract and as a sacrament, in the eyes of the whole Catholic Church; and she was advised that she might return to live with him without blame. Whereupon she gave a breakfast at her own house, 'to the whole town of London,' to celebrate the event. The ensuing eight years were, she always declared, the happiest of her connection with the Prince. She used to

say that they were extremely poor, but as happy as crickets; and as a proof of their poverty she told Lord Stourton that once, on their returning to Brighton from London, they mustered their common means, and could not raise £5 between them. They had no children; but on the death of one of her dearest friends, Lady Horatia Seymour, she adopted that friend's infant, Mary Georgiana, or 'Minnie' as she was called; to whom she became, as the young lady herself testified, more than a mother. When in London, they lived in a large house in Tilney Street, Park Lane. The sixth Earl of Albemarle was a frequent visitor there in his boyhood, and he has left us a record of some of the impressions which remained with him after many years. His visits, he says, were to the little lady of his own age, who presented him to the Prince of Wales:—

His appearance and manners were both of a nature to produce a lively impression on the mind of a child—a merry, good-humoured man, tall, though somewhat portly in stature, in the prime of life, with laughing eyes, pouting lips, and a nose which, very slightly turned up, gave a peculiar poignancy to the expression of his face. He wore a well-powdered wig, adorned with a profusion of curls, which, in my innocence, I believed to be his own hair, as I did a very large pigtail appended thereto. His clothes fitted him like a glove, his coat was single-breasted, and buttoned up to the chin. His nether

garments were leather pantaloons and Hessian boots. Round his throat was a huge white neckcloth of many folds, out of which his chin seemed to be always struggling to emerge.

No sooner was His Royal Highness seated in his arm-chair than my young companion would jump upon one of his knees, to which she seemed to claim a prescriptive right. Straightway would arise an animated talk between 'Priunny and Minnie,' as they respectively called themselves. As my father was high in favour with the Prince at this time, I was occasionally admitted to the spare knee and to a share in the conversation, if conversation it could be called in which all were talkers and none listeners.<sup>1</sup>

That the Prince remained devoted to Mrs. Fitzherbert for so long as he did speaks volumes for her power of fascination. But his constitutional fickleness ultimately gained the ascendant. The final breach between them was, in Mrs. Fitzherbert's opinion, distinctly traceable to some negotiations which she and the Prince had with the Hertford family, in consequence of attempts which were made to wrest the guardianship of Minnie Seymour away from her. At any rate, these negotiations brought the Prince into constant intercourse with Lady Hertford; and not long afterwards, when at Brighton, His Royal Highness, after passing part of the morning with her at her own house, on their usual

<sup>1</sup> *Fifty Years of my Life*, by George Thomas, Earl of Albemarle. 3rd ed. 1877, pp. 18, 19.

footing, would not so much as notice her in the evening at the Pavilion, from fear that his action might be reported to the rival lady. The climax came on the 19th of June 1811, on the occasion of a dinner given to Louis the Eighteenth. On all former occasions, to avoid etiquette in circumstances of such delicacy as her peculiar relation to the Prince, it had been customary for them to sit at table without regard to rank. On this occasion it was determined to alter the plan; and when Mrs. Fitzherbert asked the Prince where she was to sit, he said: 'You know, Madam, you have no place.' To which she replied: 'None, Sir, but such as you choose to give me.' She was thus excluded from the Royal table, and soon after, says Lord Stourton, obtained the reluctant consent of some of the members of the Royal Family to finally close her connection with the Prince.<sup>1</sup> The Queen and the Duke of York interested themselves to get for her a mortgage on the Palace at Brighton, to make her annuity of £6000 perfectly secure; and for the rest of her life she resided mainly at that favourite watering-place, in a house on the Steyne, now the 'Old Club,' much respected, and beloved for her benevolence and charity to the poor.

<sup>1</sup> Langdale, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

The year 1811, it will be remembered, was the first of the Regency. Nine years later the Prince ascended the throne as George the Fourth; and soon after occurred his ill-advised attempt to get rid of his Queen by a Bill of Divorce. When accused of misconduct, Caroline is reported to have made the retort that if she ever had committed adultery, it was with nobody else than Mrs. Fitzherbert's husband. George the Fourth, as we know, was gathered to his fathers in 1830. During his last illness Mrs. Fitzherbert wrote what Lord Stourton tells us was 'an affecting tender of any services she could render him'; but, although she heard from a trustworthy source that the King seized her letter with eagerness and immediately placed it under his pillow, no answer was ever returned. Nearly half a century afterwards, Lord Albemarle first gave publicity to the following curious and romantic story, which was told to him by the present Earl Fortescue, husband of the daughter of the Hon. Mrs. Dawson Damer, Mrs. Fitzherbert's adopted child. In the early days of their married life the Prince had presented Mrs. Fitzherbert with a large diamond. This jewel she had had divided into two halves, and each half converted into a transparent plate to cover a small miniature. Behind the one

was the Prince's portrait, which she reserved for herself, and behind the other her own miniature, which she gave to him, and which, on their final separation, was not returned to her. When on his deathbed, twenty-seven years afterwards, the King requested that he might be buried in the night-clothes which he was then wearing. Lord Albemarle's story goes on :—

Almost immediately after he breathed his last, the Duke of Wellington, his executor, arrived at Windsor Castle, and was shown into the room in which the King lay. Left alone with the lifeless form of his late sovereign, the Duke approached the bed, and then discovered round the King's neck a very dirty and much worn piece of black ribbon. This, the Duke, as he afterwards acknowledged, was seized with an irrepressible desire to draw out. When he had done so he found attached to it the jewelled miniature of Mrs. Fitzherbert, which sufficiently accounted for the strange order given by the King about his burial.<sup>1</sup>

He therefore carried to his grave the image of her who was perhaps, as Lord Albemarle remarks, the only woman whom he had respected as well as loved. There is an interesting little pendant to this story. When the Duke related the incident to Mrs. Damer, as he sat by her one day at dinner, 'he actually

<sup>1</sup> Albemarle, *op. cit.*, pp. 376-7.

blushed with the most amazing confusion for having been guilty of yielding to an impulse *plus fort que lui.*'

Soon after George the Fourth's death, Mrs. Fitzherbert took occasion, when William the Fourth was at Brighton, to show him the certificate of her marriage, and other papers relating to her connection with the late King. William the Fourth, says Lord Stourton, expressed great surprise that she had shown so much forbearance, under the pressure of long and severe trials, when such documents were in her possession. He asked her what amends he could make, and offered to create her a Duchess. On her declining this honour, he authorised her to wear widow's weeds for his Royal brother, and insisted that she should always use the Royal livery. He also took an early opportunity to introduce her to his family, who ever after treated her as one of themselves. Thomas Raikes says that she maintained a very handsome establishment, both in Tilney Street and at Brighton, that she was very hospitable, and that her handsome dinners, services of plate, and numerous train of servants in the Royal livery, who had all grown old in her service, gave to her house at least a seigneurial, if not a Royal appearance. And on the Continent her treatment

was similar to that she received in England. Writing from Paris in December 1833, she says :—

I have taken a very quiet apartment, and live very retired, seeing occasionally some friends. The Duke of Orleans came to see me the moment I arrived, with a thousand kind messages from the King and Queen, desiring me to go to them, which I accordingly have done. Nothing could exceed the kindness of their reception of me : they are old acquaintances of mine. . . . They have given me a general invitation to go there every evening whenever I like it, which suits me very much.<sup>1</sup>

On her return to England in October of the following year she writes to the same correspondent to say the King had sent for her a day or two after her arrival in London ; that nothing could have been more kind than his reception, and that he had made her a very handsome present, which he said he had had made expressly for her, but would not send it during her stay on the Continent.

Previous to this continental journey in 1833, she had determined, with the cordial sanction of William the Fourth, to destroy all papers relating to her connection with the late King, excepting the marriage certificate, and one or two other documents, which she wished to preserve for the vindication of her character. An agreement for

<sup>1</sup> Langdale, *op. cit.*

this purpose was drawn up, which a rough copy, still in existence in Lord Albemarle's handwriting, shows to have been to the following effect :—

It is agreed by Mrs. Fitzherbert on the one part, and the executors of the will of the late King on the other, that each will destroy all papers and documents (with the exception of those hereafter mentioned) in the possession of either, signed or written by Mrs. Fitzherbert or by her directions, or signed or written by the late King, when Prince of Wales or King of Great Britain, etc., or by his command. . . . Such papers and documents as Mrs. Fitzherbert shall wish to keep shall be sealed up in a cover, under the seals of the Duke of Wellington and Sir William Knighton, and of the Earl of Albemarle and Lord Stourton. The seals not to be broken excepting with the knowledge of the Duke of Wellington, and Sir William Knighton. It is understood that no copy of any paper or document is to be taken or kept on either side.

Here follows a list of the papers and documents that Mrs. Fitzherbert wishes to retain :—

- (1) The mortgage on the palace at Brighton.
- (2) Certificate of marriage, dated December 21, 1785.
- (3) Letter from the late King relating to the marriage.
- (4) Will written by the late King.
- (5) Memorandum written by Mrs. Fitzherbert, attached to the letter written by the clergyman who performed the ceremony.<sup>1</sup>

In pursuance of this agreement the Duke of Wellington met the Earl of Albemarle at Mrs.

<sup>1</sup> Albemarle, *op. cit.*, pp. 374-5.

Fitzherbert's house in Tilney Street on the 24th of August for the purpose of destroying the condemned papers. 'Some idea of the mass of manuscripts committed to the flames may be formed,' says Lord Albemarle's son, 'by an expression of the Duke to my father after several hours' burning: "I think, my lord, we had better hold our hand for a while, or we shall set the old woman's chimney on fire."' The five documents to be preserved were made into a packet and deposited at Coutts's Bank, where, says Lord Albemarle (writing in 1877), they now remain: 'They are declared to be "the property of the Earl of Albemarle"; they are, however, not *my* property, but are held in trust by my brother Edward, as my father's executor.' We are, I think, justified in drawing the inference that, had they been the property of George Thomas, sixth Earl of Albemarle, he would have broken the seals, and made the public more fully acquainted with the contents of the packet. For what other purpose, indeed, were those papers so carefully preserved? On the 7th of December 1833, Mrs. Fitzherbert wrote to Lord Stourton, her relative and co-religionist:—

I know I must have been a great torment to you, but I am sure the kind feelings of your heart will derive some gratifi-

cation in having relieved me from a state of misery and anxiety which has been the bane of my life; and I trust, whenever it shall please God to remove me from this world, my conduct and character (in your hands) will not disgrace my family and my friends.<sup>1</sup>

She died at Brighton the 29th of March 1837, at the age of eighty-one, and was buried in the old Catholic church there, in which will be found a handsome monument erected to her memory by the Hon. Mrs. Dawson Damer, to whom, as the inscription declares, 'she was more than a parent.' No one who knew her has ever spoken harshly of her. Charles Greville's diary is much fuller of blame than of praise of any of his contemporaries, but of Mrs. Fitzherbert, on hearing of her death, he wrote: 'She was not a clever woman, but of a very noble spirit, disinterested, generous, honest and affectionate, greatly beloved by her friends and relations, popular in the world and treated with uniform distinction and respect by the Royal Family.'<sup>2</sup> And even the Hon. Grantley Berkeley, whose four volumes of more or less unpleasant *Recollections* show him to have been almost constitutionally incapable of appreciating any but the lowest motives, is forced to admit that she was 'so thoroughly

<sup>1</sup> Langdale, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> *Greville Memoirs*, vol. iii. p. 404.

amiable and good-natured that every one who came within the circle of her influence felt inclined to shut his or her eyes against any cognizance of her true position."

I remember well [he says] her delicately fair, yet commanding features, and gentle demeanour. That exquisite complexion she maintained, almost unimpaired by time, not only long after the departure of youth, but up to the arrival of old age; and her manner, unaffected by years, was equally well preserved."

In spite of all her trials and disappointments, and her ultimate desertion by the Prince, she was singularly free from any trace of malignity or bitterness. She had a soul above all mercenary views, and never took advantage of her position of almost unbounded influence to enrich either herself or her relations. To the end she maintained her station in society, in distance of intrigue and calumny. She discovered that the validity of her marriage was not such as to justify her in founding any public claim upon it, and she had too fine a sense of honour to use it, as an unscrupulous and vindictive woman could and undoubtedly would have done, for the extortion of money and honours, or perhaps even to secure her father's Prince's exclu-

<sup>1</sup> *Charles Fox's life*, 9th ed., vol. i. pp. 26-7.

sion from the throne. Princess of Wales she was not; but, as Lord Albemarle says, 'as far as the laws of her Church could make her so,' she was the wife of George, Prince of Wales.

The first occasion which seemed to call for the production of the documents preserved in Coutts's Bank was Lord Holland's assertion, in the second volume of his *Memoirs of the Whig Party*, published in 1854, that he had been told by a friend, 'a man of strict veracity,' that Mrs. Fitzherbert had herself told him that it was the Prince who (not at her request) had insisted on the ceremony of the 21st of December 1785; that she well knew this to be invalid in law, that in fact she thought it nonsense, and told the Prince so. Mrs. Fitzherbert had confided the defence of her reputation to Lord Stourton. This nobleman died in 1846, but some time before his death he had delegated this duty to his brother, the Hon. Charles Langdale, supplying him with all the papers and information he possessed bearing upon the matter. On the appearance of Lord Holland's libellous statement, Mr. Langdale naturally conceived that the time had arrived for him to act, and he applied for permission to examine the papers in the sealed packet at Coutts's. The Duke of Wellington was willing to agree to anything

which Lord Albemarle might do in the matter ; but Lord Albemarle died before Mr. Langdale could obtain any decision from him, and his executor, the Hon. and Rev. Edward S. Keppell, declined to allow the papers to be seen. Mr. Langdale was therefore forced to content himself with the publication, in the *Memoir* which he issued in 1856, of a list of the papers which, if produced, would, in his opinion, reinstate the reputation of his deceased relative. It is also to be regretted that, in consequence of other limitations which Mr. Langdale imposed upon himself, his little volume fails to give anything like a vivid or complete picture of what must have been an exceptionally charming personality.

That George the Fourth was afraid of being compromised by these papers is evidenced by the anxiety which he occasionally exhibited about them. Tom Moore notes in his Diary that, being at Prince Leopold's assembly on the 16th of June 1825, just when his forthcoming *Life of Sheridan* was beginning to be talked about,

Lord Hastings expressed a wish to have a minute's conversation with me, and on our reaching a retired part of the room said that he heard I intended, in my forthcoming work, to bring forward proofs of the King's marriage with Mrs. Fitzherbert. Instead of giving some uncertain answer which

might have drawn from him an explanation of the object he had in this inquiry, I answered that I had no such intentions, nor, indeed, knew anything of the existence of such proofs, but merely meant to allude to the *constitutional* consequences which *would* have resulted from such a marriage had it taken place. It is evident, I think, that the Carlton House people have expressed some alarm on the subject, and that his lordship volunteered his mediation to prevent what they dreaded. But does not this look as if Lord Hastings was aware such proofs exist? <sup>1</sup>

Greville says that George the Fourth was always afraid lest Mrs. Fitzherbert should make use of the documents in her possession to annoy or injure him, and that he made various efforts to obtain possession of them. On one occasion he sent Sir William Knighton to Mrs. Fitzherbert for the purpose, and this confidential agent, although a stranger to her, called one day at her house, when she was ill in bed, insisted upon seeing her, and forced his way into her bedroom.<sup>2</sup> He brought away nothing, for all his pains; but it was this domiciliary visit, Greville says, which determined her to make a final disposition of all the papers she possessed, so that after her death no advantage might be taken of them, either against her own

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs, Journal, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore*, ed. by Lord John Russell, vol. iv. pp. 292-3, 1853.

<sup>2</sup> *Greville Memoirs*, vol. iii. p. 404.

memory or the interests of any other person. Had she been a mercenary woman, she might have obtained a large sum of money for these documents and the mass of correspondence which it was in her power to lay before the public. She used to say that she could have given the best public and private history of all the transactions of the country from the close of the American War down to the death of the Duke of York. All this valuable historical material the Duke of Wellington and Lord Albemarle were allowed to send up 'the old woman's chimney.' The sealed packet of papers in Coutts's Bank, however, was put there for the express purpose of being some day published for the vindication of Mrs. Fitzherbert's conduct and character. Some time before his death, which occurred in 1883, the Hon. and Rev. Edward S. Keppel placed the packet of papers in question under the control of his nephew, Lord Bury, on the same conditions as those on which the trust had been handed over to him. This Lord Bury afterwards became seventh Earl of Albemarle, and died in 1894. As there is no reference to the matter in his will, it may be presumed that he followed his uncle's example, and made special arrangements for the continuance of the trust. On

this point I have been unable to obtain any information. I hope, however, that the publication of the foregoing narrative may induce the present trustee, whoever he may be, to consider whether any longer time should be allowed to elapse before the documents are used for the purpose for which Mrs. Fitzherbert was so careful to preserve them.





*Lady Hamilton,  
From the Picture by M<sup>rs</sup> Hilda Gamlin.  
Engraved by Kelton.*

## NELSON'S LADY HAMILTON

THE true story of the beautiful siren who so indissolubly connected her name with that of England's greatest naval hero has but slowly disentangled itself from a mass of fable. Southey's references to her, in his charming and still popular little *Life of Nelson*, are not only meagre but misleading. The anonymous author of the *Memoirs* of 1815 represented her as a mere vulgar demirep. And Pettigrew, who, thirty-five years later, in his *Life of Nelson*, gave what was certainly the first coherent account of the enchantress's career, was led by an excessive credulity, and a want of documentary evidence, into various errors of fact and of judgment, which some subsequent biographers have copied and enlarged upon. The consequence is that we have such varying estimates of Lady Hamilton as, on the one hand, the severe judgment of her contemporary, Sir James Mackintosh, who spoke of her as 'a ferocious woman, who lowered the illustrious name of an English matron

to the level of a Parisian fishwoman,' and, on the other hand, the verdict of Mr. John Paget, who, as late as 1888, was bold enough to claim for her an honourable place in history, and to contend that she was 'entitled to the gratitude not only of England, but of humanity in general.'

All the world learned, in 1805, that on October 21 of that year, immediately before the battle of Trafalgar, when the combined fleets of France and Spain were in sight, and the British ships were being cleared for action, Nelson retired to his cabin, and, after a prayer for a great and glorious victory, wrote in his diary a remarkable 'codicil,' which was duly witnessed by Captains Blackwood and Hardy, wherein, on account of certain eminent services which he alleged she had rendered to the British fleet, he solemnly left Lady Hamilton as a legacy to his country, with the request that a suitable provision might be made for her by Government. Also that, but a few hours later, as he lay dying in the cockpit of the *Victory*, almost his last articulate words had been: 'Remember that I leave Lady Hamilton and my daughter Horatia as a legacy to my country.' Of course, for some years previously, rumour had been busy about the existence of an illicit connection between the popular British

admiral and the beautiful wife of the Ambassador to the Court of Naples. But it is small matter for wonder that the publication of this document, and the report of the last words of the hero of Trafalgar, should have created a deep and widespread feeling that the solemn dying request of such a man ought to have been held sacred by his country. What is perhaps not quite so intelligible is that, notwithstanding the very different complexion which subsequent investigations have put upon the matter, many people appear to be of the same opinion still. Lady Hamilton continued to the end of her life to memorialise Government for a reward for her services; but, presumably because those in authority were able to estimate these at their true value, nothing was ever done for her. It was not, however, until nearly eighty years after her death that the real facts of the case were sufficiently accessible for the general public to form a just judgment on the matter. But by the publication of the late Mr. Jeaffreson's two books on the subject, the printing of the valuable letters and documents collected by Mr. Alfred Morrison, of Fonthill, and the researches of Professor Laughton, most of the disputed points in the career of this remarkable woman have been cleared up. Some

of the offences laid to her charge have been found to rest on no very good evidence, and some of the patriotic services for which our admiration and gratitude were demanded are seen to be greatly diminished in degree and significance. Even, however, if Nelson had not indelibly written her name on the page of history, the life-story of the blacksmith's daughter who raised herself from the condition of a nursemaid to be the wife of an English ambassador and the bosom friend of a Neapolitan Queen, would still have remained as strange a story as anything in the whole range of fiction.

The date of this siren's birth has never been ascertained with any degree of certainty. She was in the habit of keeping April 26 as her birthday, and the anonymous *Memoir* of 1815 gives the year of her birth as 1761, which is the date adopted by the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Pettigrew states it to have been 1764; and Mr. Jeaffreson concurs with the register of her death at Calais, which, stating her age in January 1815 to have been 51, would make the year of her birth 1763. Pettigrew and other biographers stated that she was born at Preston, in Lancashire, and on the strength of this she has been picturesquely termed 'the last of the Lancashire witches.' But the registers of

the church of Great Neston, in Cheshire, where she was baptized on May 12, 1765, transfer to that county whatever honour may attach to the place of her birth, and prove that she was the daughter of Henry Lyon, blacksmith, of Nesse, and Mary, his wife. According to the same register, the said Henry Lyon was buried, at the same place, on June 21 in the following year. After her husband's death, Mary Lyon, taking her infant with her, went to live with her mother, Mrs. Kidd, who dwelt in the village of Hawarden, since so well known as the residence of the late Mr. Gladstone. Whether Mary Lyon married again or not is unknown; but, like her celebrated daughter, she seems to have had a fancy for changing her name. In a will made by Lady Hamilton in 1806, she refers to 'my dear mother, formerly Mary Kidd, then Lions, and after Mary Doggen or Cadogan.' We shall hear of her again as Mrs. Cadogan. The child was christened Amy, but she also signed herself, at various times, Emly, Emily, or Emyly Lyon; and from 1782 until her marriage with Sir William Hamilton (when she was careful to sign the register 'Amy Lyon') she passed by the name of Emma Hart. Of her earliest years nothing whatever is known; but she must have been still quite a child when, in the capacity

of nursemaid, she entered the service of Mrs. Thomas, wife of a surgeon practising at Hawarden; and she can hardly have been more than fifteen or sixteen years of age when she first came to London. Here, for a short time, she is said to have been in service: first, with Mrs. Linley, of Drury Lane Theatre; secondly, with Dr. Budd, one of the physicians of St. Bartholomew's Hospital; and finally at a fruiterer's in St. James's Market. One of the customers at this shop, 'a lady of fashion,' attracted by the girl's manner, her beautiful face, and her wonderful auburn hair, engaged her in the capacity of companion. But, fortunate as the change at this time may have appeared to her, it speedily put an end to her opportunities of earning an honest living. No long time after, we hear of her as living for a time with Captain (afterwards Admiral) John Willett Payne, who is by some surmised to be the father of a girl to whom she gave birth about the end of 1779 or the beginning of 1780. However this may be, it is certain that, before she had completed her seventeenth year, she did give birth to a child, and that, as soon as possible, it was transferred to the care of her old grandmother at Hawarden. For some months she is said to have been in great want, but in the course

of 1780 she seems to have earned her living by posing as Hygeia, or the Goddess of Health, in the exhibition of that prince of quacks, James Graham. In 1781 she lived, with some degree of extravagance, as the mistress of Sir Harry Fetherstonehaugh, a dissolute baronet, of Up Park, in Sussex, during which time she is reputed to have become a daring and highly accomplished horsewoman. But the baronet, for some unexplained reason, abruptly dismissed her about Christmas of that year, when she was within a few months of a second *accouchement*, with no more money in her pockets than sufficed to pay her travelling expenses to the home of her grandmother at Hawarden. From this temporary refuge she wrote to him again and again, but he was evidently immovable in his determination to sever the connection, for he never answered any of her letters.

Among the friends of Fetherstonehaugh with whom she had been intimate—possibly too intimate—at Up Park, was the Hon. Charles Greville, second son of the Earl of Warwick; and in her distress she now applied to him for help. On January 7 or 8, 1782, she wrote to him, from Hawarden, in terms which suggest a considerable degree of previous familiarity:—

Good God! what shall I dow? I have wrote 7 letters and no answer. I cant come to town caus I out of money. I have not a farthing to bless myself with, and I think my frends looks cooly on me. . . . For God's sake G. write the minet you get this, and only tell me what I am to dow. . . . I am allmos mad.<sup>1</sup>

It will be observed that the young woman had original notions of spelling. But it must be remembered that to be able to write a letter at all was by no means a common accomplishment amongst village maidens at the end of the eighteenth century. Of course she was quite innocent of any attempt at punctuation, and she was in the habit of plentifully besprinkling her epistles with capital letters, not only at the beginning, but frequently also in the middle of her words. But she never fails to make her meaning clear enough. Greville sent her money to bring her to London as soon as she was in a condition to travel, and made a bargain with her as to the terms on which she might come to live with him. Although an earl's son, he was, he assured her, a poor man; but he could manage to keep up a modest establishment, with a couple

<sup>1</sup> *Collection of Autograph Letters and Historical Documents formed by Alfred Morrison. Second Series. The Hamilton and Nelson Papers. Privately printed. 1893-4. Vol. i. p. 78.*

of maidservants, at the rate of about £300 a year. She might have her mother to live with her, and he would see to it that her child did not want; but she must absolutely give up all other connections and old friends. She instantly closed with the bargain; and in the spring of 1782 Greville and the young woman, who now called herself Emma Hart, established themselves in a small house in Edgware Row, immediately adjoining Paddington Green. She was then, if Mr. Jeaffreson's date be correct, just nineteen years of age. Greville's age was thirty-three. He was a member of Parliament, a welcome guest in the best London houses, a *dilettante* and connoisseur, and also, apparently, a shrewd and capable man of business, who knew how to make his £500 a year go as far as many another man's thousand. The little rooms in Edgware Row were adorned with pictures, statuary, rare mezzotints and other engravings, and in these, as well as in his ancient coins and mineralogical specimens, Greville taught his young *protégée* to take an intelligent interest. He likewise encouraged her to read poetry and other works of imagination of his choosing; and he went to some expense in providing her with masters for singing and the pianoforte. Her

erratic spelling and handwriting he appears to have discreetly left to take care of themselves; but during the four years she lived with him a very marked improvement in these, as well as other matters, is distinctly noticeable.

Among the many apocryphal stories that have been circulated about her is one to the effect that she was the servant, the model, and the mistress of Romney. Mr. Jeaffreson repudiates this with much indignation, declaring that she never sat as a paid model to anybody, and that her relations with Romney were always those of cordial and respectful friendship. There is certainly no evidence to the contrary. Greville introduced her to the painter in 1782, and poor Romney was at once captivated by her beauty, called her his 'divine lady,' and remained her devoted slave to the end of his unhappy life. At various times he painted no less than twenty-four portraits of her. Perhaps no woman, not a professional model, was ever so frequently painted. She was the original of Sir Joshua's 'Bacchante,' sat to Hoppner and to Laurence, and, in later days, to an endless number of foreign artists. Pettigrew speaks of the 'splendid misery' of her life with Greville; but there appears to have been little misery; and

undoubtedly there was nothing that could be called splendour. Her mother, now known as Mrs. Cadogan, lived in the house, and acted as companion, cook, and housekeeper. From the account-books which Emma scrupulously kept, and which are now to be seen in the Morrison Collection, we find that she had two maids, who were paid £9 and £8 a year respectively. Her own allowance for clothes and pocket-money was the modest sum of £20 per annum; and the greater part of her time was spent in practising music and singing, in both of which she attained to great proficiency. It is also apparent that she grew to have a strong and lasting affection for the cold-blooded Greville, whom she idealised as the kindest and best of living men. It is at the same time equally apparent that, though Greville had the greatest admiration for her beauty, and a clear perception of her artistic and dramatic faculty, which he spared neither pains nor expense to foster, he never really loved her, and never for one moment entertained any thought of ultimately marrying her. He had much the same pride in his personal possession of her as he would have had in being the owner of the marble Venus de Medici.

In 1784 Greville's maternal uncle, Sir William

Hamilton, Envoy Extraordinary to the Court of Naples, came on a visit to London, and at once went into raptures over the beauty of the young woman whom he found domiciled with his nephew in Edgware Row. Hamilton was a handsome and remarkably young-looking widower of fifty-four, with artistic and archæological tastes like his nephew; and during his stay in London Emma saw much of him, and found him a very charming addition to her very limited circle of acquaintance. According to Mr. Jeaffreson,<sup>1</sup> the uncle and nephew critically discussed 'the fair tea-maker' as though she were a *chef d'œuvre* in a museum. 'She is, I think,' Greville is reported to say, 'as perfect a thing as can be found in all nature.' And the uncle replies: 'My dear Charles, she is better than anything in nature. In her particular way she is finer than anything that is to be found in antique art.' Hamilton is also reported to have asked Emma to be allowed, as a philosopher, to make her his disciple, calling himself her Pliny the Elder, and his nephew her Pliny the Younger.<sup>2</sup> Owing to the fact that, about this time, Emma was sent to the seaside with her mother and child while

<sup>1</sup> *Lady Hamilton and Lord Nelson*. By John Cordy Jeaffreson. 1888. Vol. i. p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 96.

Hamilton and his nephew paid a round of visits to some of their aristocratic relations in the country, we have a number of letters from her to the latter which clearly show the footing on which the parties had established themselves. She writes in June 1784 to say she has found lodgings 'in the house of a Lady whose husband is at sea,' at an inclusive charge of a guinea and a half a week for her mother, her child, and herself; that she begrudges the shilling a day for the bathing-horse and woman, and the twopence a day for the dress, but is somewhat consoled by thinking that it is at any rate better than having to pay a doctor. A few days later she informs him that 'the wild unthinking Emma is a grave, thoughtful phylosopher,' and she hopes he will find her turn out to be 'a valluable and aimiable whoman.' She asks him to apologise to Sir William on her behalf for not having given him a kiss before she came away; and in another letter says: 'I long to see you and dear Sir William. Give my kind love to him. Tell him that next to you I love him abbove any body.'

Before his return to Naples, Hamilton suggested that Greville should bring Emma to stay some time with him there, with a view, it seems, to getting such tuition in music and singing as would qualify

her for a professional career. But already the nephew, if not the uncle, had another plan under consideration. Greville looked upon himself as his uncle's heir; but Hamilton was evidently a vigorous and amorous widower who might very probably marry again. The nephew's income was too small for his requirements, and his affairs were already somewhat embarrassed. No profitable place had yet been found for him by any of his influential relatives, and he had thoughts of bettering his condition by marrying an heiress. For this purpose it would be necessary for him to get out of his entanglement with Emma. And if he could but get his uncle to take her off his hands he would not only be free to pursue his own matrimonial projects, but at the same time make it much less likely that Hamilton would marry again, and so despoil him of his prospective inheritance. It is a queer story. No sooner was Hamilton back in Naples than Greville began to bombard him with letters about his financial troubles and his disinclination to throw Emma on to the street. In January 1785 he writes :—

She is certainly much improved since she has been with me. She has none of the bad habits which giddiness and inexperience encouraged, and which bad choice of company

introduced. She has much pride, and submits to solitude rather than admit of one improper acquaintance. She is naturally elegant, and fits herself easily to any situation, having quickness and sensibility.'<sup>1</sup>

Two months later he makes a direct appeal to his uncle to take her from him, assuring him that he would be much happier with her than with a second wife, and backing up his request with the opinion of Sir William's brother, the Rev. Frederick Hamilton, who appears to have offered the same unclerical, not to say immoral, advice. He has been told that his uncle is in love, knows that he loves variety, and is a general flirt, wherefore :

I wish the tea-maker of Edgware Row was yours. . . . I should not write to you thus if I did not think you seemed as partial as I am to her. She would not hear at once of any change, and from no one that was not liked by her. . . . If I could go on I would never make this arrangement, but to be reduced to a standstill and involve myself in distress farther than I could extricate myself, and then to be unable to provide for her at all, would make me miserable.<sup>2</sup>

He adds certain intimate personal details by way of whetting the uncle's appetite, though this was scarcely necessary, for Sir William was as willing as Barkis. But both the conspirators, as Mr. Jeaffreson

<sup>1</sup> *Morrison Collection*, vol. i. p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 99.

well calls them, saw clearly enough that there would be much difficulty in effecting the proposed transfer. Pettigrew represented Emma as complacently passing from the possession of the nephew to that of the uncle, as a consideration for the payment of the former's debts. But he cannot have read the correspondence. It is abundantly clear that she had conceived a strong affection for the cold-blooded, cynical connoisseur, who had been kind to her in her distress; though it seems equally certain that he merely looked upon her as a collector regards an exceptionally fine specimen in his museum. She had rejected with contempt the offers of a wealthy Mr. Willoughby, who, on condition of her leaving the comparatively poor Greville to live with him, was willing to give her a mansion in the West End of the town, with carriages, servants, diamonds, and a liberal allowance of money. But 'splendid misery' was not the object of her ambition. She had even declined two advantageous offers of honourable marriage. Knowing all this, the two philosophical Plinys concocted a plausible scheme to get her out to Naples. Greville first prepared her mind for a change of circumstances by speaking of his monetary troubles, of the probability of his having to give up housekeeping altogether unless some retrenchment

were made, and of the certainty, in any case, of his having to retire to Scotland for a time. Professing great reluctance to leave her lonely and unprotected in London, he persuaded her to write to Hamilton,<sup>1</sup> reminding him of his invitation, and expressing her willingness to pay a visit of six or eight months' duration to Naples, it being understood that Greville would follow, as soon as his difficulties were surmounted, and bring her back again. This letter of Emma's was enclosed in one from Greville in which the nephew instructed the uncle how to word his reply, as well as favoured him with three or four pages of advice on the best methods of managing the young lady.<sup>2</sup> Hamilton, of course, duly wrote to say he would be most happy to receive her and to do his best to make her comfortable during her stay in Naples. Accordingly, in April 1786, she set out for Italy, accompanied by her mother, and under the escort of Gavin Hamilton, the artist, who by chance happened to be bound for the same place.

Four days after her arrival she writes to Greville, telling him Sir William has secured her pleasant apartments not far from the Embassy, has provided her with a boat, liveried servants, and a carriage,

<sup>1</sup> *Morrison Collection*, vol. i. p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i. pp. 108-110.

and that he has given her a beautiful gown and other things. But she has already begun to feel uneasy. She says :—

I dreaded sitting down to write, for I try to appear as cheerful before Sir William as I could, and I am sure to cry the moment I think of you. . . . Therefore, my dear, dear Greville, if you do love me, for my sake try all you can to come hear as soon as possible. . . . I respect Sir William. I have a great regard for him as the uncle and friend of you, and he loves me, Greville. But he can never be anything nearer to me than your uncle and my sincere friend. He never can be my lover. . . . I belong to you, Greville, and to you only.<sup>1</sup>

The following morning she adds a few agitated sentences to the same letter :—

I have had a conversation this morning with Sir William that has made me mad. He speaks—no, I do not know what to make of it. But, Greville, dear Greville, wright some comfort to me.

And a postscript says :—

For God's sake wright to me and come to me, for Sir William shall not be anything to me but your friend.<sup>2</sup>

She wrote him fourteen letters during the first fourteen weeks of her absence, and to all of these there was but one, and that an unsatisfactory, reply. Meanwhile Sir William procured for her the best

<sup>1</sup> *Morrison Collection*, vol. i. p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 115.

masters that Naples could afford for the Italian language, for music, and for singing; and it is characteristic of her that she threw herself into these studies with unbounded enthusiasm. But, all the while, week by week, she was writing to her 'dear, dear Greville' to send her one letter, if it were only a farewell. Life is insupportable without him, she says, and her heart is broken. Her final appeal was made on July 22:—

I have lived with you five years, and you have sent me to a strange place, and no one prospect but thinking you was coming to me. Instead of which I was told I was to live, you know how, with Sir William. No. I respect him; but no, never. Shall he perhaps live with me for a little while, like you, and send me to England? Then, what am I to do? What is to become of me? . . . Give me my one guinea a week for everything and live with me and I shall be contented.<sup>1</sup>

This passionate, pleading letter was crossed by one in which the cynical Greville told her emphatically that he would never live with her again in their former relation, and entreated her, for his sake, as well as for her own interest, to become his uncle's mistress. She answered in an explosive letter on August 1, that if she were with him she would murder him and herself too; but in her postscript

<sup>1</sup> *Morrison Collection*, vol. i. p. 117.

she adds a different kind of threat, in the words : 'If you affront me, I will make him marry me.' The younger Pliny doubtless thought he might safely leave his uncle to take care that she never did that ! But this young peasant-girl was much cleverer than either of her admiring philosophers imagined ; and she seems to have instantly set patiently and cautiously to work to make herself indispensable to Sir William Hamilton, with the distinct aim of one day becoming his wife. She did not let him have too easy a victory to begin with ; and he appreciated her the more highly for the delay and apparent reluctance with which she ultimately acceded to his wishes. It was not until the end of that year that she consented to take up her quarters with him at the Embassy. But, as soon as she had done so, her demonstrative affection knew no bounds. Sir William took a house for her at Caserta, from which it was necessary for him to be absent for a day or so at a time. But, however short his absence might be, she professed herself unable to live without letters from him. On one occasion she gives him four quarto pages in reply, of which the following may serve for specimen :—

Oh, my dearest Sir William, I have just received your dear, sweet letter. It has charmed me, I dont know what

to say to you in words kind enough. Oh, how kind! Do you call me your dear friend! Ah, what a happy creature is your Emma! Me, that had no friend, no protector, nobody that I could trust, and now to be the friend, the Emma, of Sir William Hamilton! <sup>1</sup>

On another occasion, only two hours after he has left her on a Thursday, with the intention of returning the following Saturday, she writes to say she shall count the hours and moments until she finds herself in his kind, dear arms—‘my friend, my All, my earthly good, every kind name in one.’ <sup>2</sup> The elderly diplomatist appears to have had perfect faith in her sincerity, but to our ears the words do not ring true, as they did in the passionate letters to Greville.

All direct communication with the younger Pliny ceased for a time. But about nine months after taking up her residence in Sir William Hamilton's house she began a long letter to her former lover, to which she added a page or so from time to time, so that when, after receipt of a present from him, she was sufficiently mollified to despatch the epistle, it gave him a fairly full account of her doings during the fourteen months that their intercourse had been interrupted. ‘Although you never think me worth writing to,’ she begins, ‘yet I cannot so easily forget

<sup>1</sup> *Morrison Collection*, vol. i. p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 128.

you, and whenever I have had any particular pleasure, I feel as though I was not right till I had communicated it to my dearest Greville.' And she goes on to tell him of her visits to Vesuvius; of her singing lessons and singing triumphs; that Sir William is very fond of her; that he has nine pictures of her already, and the house full of artists to paint more; that Marchant is cutting her head in stone, one man modelling her in wax, and another in clay; that they always have good company, and nobody is allowed to come unless they are civil to her. She relates how she gave a concert after a diplomatic dinner, and sang so well that Banti, 'who is first whoman at St. Carlo's,' exclaimed: 'Just God, what a voice!' How she was entertained by Commodore Melville on board his ship, which gave her a salute of twenty guns; how, in consequence of the length of the festivities on board, she was too late to dress for the opera, and consequently went thither as she was, 'drest all in virgin white, and my hair in ringlets reaching allmost to my heels'; and how the Commodore and his officers attended her box, and behaved to her as though she were the queen. She relates how the people of Ischia fell down on their knees and begged her to grant them favours on account of her likeness to the pictures of

the Blessed Virgin; and a great deal more of a similar character, written in no very legible handwriting, and in constant defiance of the rules of grammar and orthography, but at the same time giving a vivid word-picture of the various occurrences which might well arouse the envy of many persons of some literary pretensions.<sup>1</sup>

Of course the Signora Hart was not received at Court, but she was free of the greater part of the Italian society of Naples; and if some of the resident English held aloof, it appears to have been only for a short time. In 1789 the Duchess of Argyll (one of the beautiful Gunning sisters) made a prolonged stay in Naples, and was so attracted by Emma that she took her completely under her wing. It was probably her intimacy with this great lady and with Lady Elcho, drawing as it did almost all the English residents and tourists to acknowledge and receive her, coupled with a report that the King and Queen had spoken of the Signora Hart as an example of feminine propriety which some of the ladies of the Neapolitan nobility might do worse than imitate, which turned the scale, a year or two later, when Hamilton was undecided whether or not to make her his wife. She had learned to speak

<sup>1</sup> Jeaffreson, *op. cit.*, vol. i. pp. 200-8.

French tolerably, and Italian with great fluency. Her voice, too, had developed beyond all expectation, and she had made great progress with her music and singing. She tells Greville, in 1787, that one night she sang fifteen songs, and left the people at Sorrento with their heads turned; adding, with a spice of maliciousness, 'They were all nobility, as proud as the devil, but we humbled them.' It was in this year that Goethe saw her during his tour in Italy; and in the *Italienische Reise* we have the earliest notice of the 'attitudes,' which afterwards became so famous. Writing from Caserta on March 16, 1787, Goethe says:—

Sir William Hamilton, who still resides here as ambassador from England, has at length, after his long love of art, and long study, discovered the most perfect of admirers [? specimens] of nature and art in a beautiful young woman. She lives with him: an Englishwoman of about twenty years old. She is very handsome, and of a beautiful figure. The old knight has had made for her a Greek costume, which becomes her extremely. Dressed in this, and letting her hair loose, and taking a couple of shawls, she exhibits every possible variety of posture, expression, and look, so that at the last the spectator almost fancies it is a dream. One beholds here in perfection, in movement, in ravishing variety, all that the greatest of artists have rejoiced to be able to produce. Standing, kneeling, sitting, lying down, grave or sad, playful, exulting, repentant, wanton, menacing, anxious—all mental

states follow rapidly one after another. With wonderful taste she suits the folding of her veil to each expression, and with the same handkerchief makes every kind of head-dress. The old knight holds the light for her, and enters into the exhibition with his whole soul. He thinks he can discover in her a resemblance to all the most famous antiques, all the beautiful profiles of the Sicilian coins—aye, of the Apollo Belvedere itself. This much, at any rate, is certain—the entertainment is unique.<sup>1</sup>

Goethe admired her, and goes so far as to describe her as ‘a masterpiece of the great artist—Nature’; but he did not lose his head. About a month after first seeing the ‘attitudes’ he mentions dining with Hamilton again, when ‘Miss Hart displayed her musical and melodious talents.’ And he goes on to say:—

If I might allow myself a remark, which to be sure comes with no good grace from a guest so politely entertained as I have been, I should observe that our beauteous hostess seemed to me by no means richly endowed in respect of mind, and that the promise of her fair figure was by no means made good by any expression of voice or language betokening equal wealth of soul. Her singing itself has in it no corresponding fulness.<sup>2</sup>

Of course Sir William Hamilton could hardly regard Emma with the detachment of mind characteristic of the great German; and in December

<sup>1</sup> Goethe's *Italienische Reise*. Bohn's translation, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331.

of this year we find him writing enthusiastically to his nephew concerning the improvement she has made in manners, language, and music. 'I can assure you,' he says, 'her behaviour is such as has acquired her many sensible admirers, and we have a good man society, and all the female nobility, with the queen at their head, show her every distant civility.' In 1790 he delighted the object of his admiration with a present of £500 worth of diamonds; and in the following year we hear of her first great public assembly, when her salons were thronged by some four hundred people, including 'all the foreign ministers and their wives, all the first ladies of fashion, foreigners and Neapolitans.' Sir William had long divined that her object was marriage. Two years before this he had discussed the matter with Greville, to whom he wrote: 'Certainly she would be welcome to share with me, on our present footing, all I have during my life; but I fear her views are beyond what I can bring myself to execute, and that, when her hopes on that point are over, she will make herself and me unhappy. Hitherto her behaviour is irreproachable, but her temper, as you must know, unequal.' Emma, however, managed to keep her naturally quick temper well

under control, aided, as she assured Romney, by a diligent study of Hayley's didactic poem on the subject. And in 1791 she attained the object of her ambition, for in that year Sir William brought her with him to England for a few months, and on September 6 they were quietly married at Marylebone Church, the bride then being twenty-eight and the bridegroom sixty-one years of age.

Queen Charlotte declined to receive Lady Hamilton at Court, but on her way back to Italy she had an audience of Marie Antoinette in Paris, and was made the bearer of a letter to the latter's sister, Maria Caroline of Naples. Shortly after her return she writes to her old friend Romney to say she has been received with open arms by all the Neapolitans of both sexes, by all the foreigners of every distinction, has been presented to the Queen by her own desire, and is the happiest woman in the world. Lady Malmesbury, who dined with the Hamiltons at Caserta on Boxing Day 1791, writes to her sister, Lady Elliot, that the Ambassador's wife 'behaves as well as possible, and quite wonderfully considering her origin and education.'<sup>1</sup> And at a

<sup>1</sup> *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, first Earl of Minto*. 1874. Vol. i. p. 402.

later date she adds: 'You never saw anything so charming as Lady Hamilton's attitudes. The most graceful statues or pictures do not give you an idea of them. Her dancing of the Tarantella is beautiful to a degree.'<sup>1</sup> Her beauty was now at its zenith. She is described as having a broad forehead, finely pencilled eyebrows, blue eyes, a delicate nose with the slightest possible aquiline curve, good teeth, a clear complexion, the bust of a Juno, a head set on its beautiful neck like a bit of antique sculpture, and a splendid mass of auburn, or rich chestnut, hair, which she sometimes let fall in ringlets to her very feet. She appears to have risen to the duties of her new position in a very creditable manner. Writing six months after their marriage, Hamilton says: 'She has had a difficult part to act, and has succeeded wonderfully, having gained, by having no pretensions, the thorough approbation of all the English ladies.' A few years later, however, she became extremely stout, owing in great measure, it is to be feared, to a somewhat excessive indulgence in the pleasures of the table. She ate largely, and frankly declared herself to be passionately fond of champagne. But she was

<sup>1</sup> Minto, *op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 406.

by no means idle. On June 2, 1793, in a letter to Greville, she says :—

I study very hard, and I have made great progress in French and music. . . . The English garden is going on very fast . . . it is Sir William's favourite child, and booth him and me are now studying botany, but not to make ourselves pedantical prigs and to show our learning like some of our travelling neigours, but for our own pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

It was in 1793 that Nelson (then Captain of the *Agamemnon*), being sent by Lord Hood with despatches to Naples, first made the acquaintance of the Hamiltons. He took a great liking to the Ambassador, and told him with sailor-like bluntness and cordiality, 'You are a man after my own heart; you do business after my own way.' As to her ladyship, he wrote home to his wife that she was 'a young woman of amiable manners, who does honour to the station to which she is raised.' Hamilton told his wife that their guest would some day be a great man; but at that time she does not seem to have taken much more notice of Nelson than she would have done of any other naval officer in a similar position. Her friendship with Maria Caroline progressed apace, and in December 1794

<sup>1</sup> *Morrison Collection*, vol. i. p. 117.

we find the Hamiltons lodged in the Royal Palace at Caserta, and the Queen supplying Emma with horses, an equerry, 'and her own servant in her own livery every day.' No person can be so charming as the Queen, she tells Greville, 'and if you should ever see a cursed book, written by a vile French dog, with her character in it, don't believe one word.' Several contemporary observers have put on record their impressions of her ladyship at this period of her life, and it is interesting to note how she is represented from different points of view. An English aristocrat, Sir Gilbert Elliot, afterwards Earl of Minto, who was in Naples in 1796, thus describes her :—

She is the most extraordinary compound I ever beheld. Her person is nothing short of monstrous for its enormity, and is growing every day. She tries hard to think size advantageous to her beauty, but is not easy about it. Her face is beautiful: she is all nature, and yet all art; that is to say, her manners are perfectly unpolished, of course very easy, though not with the ease of good breeding, but of a barmaid; excessively good-humoured, and wishing to please and be admired by all ages and sorts of persons that come in her way; but, besides considerable natural understanding, she has acquired since her marriage some knowledge of history and the arts, and one wonders at the application and pains she has taken to make herself what she is. With men her language and conversation are exaggerations of

anything I have ever heard anywhere, and I was wonderfully struck with these inveterate remains of her origin.<sup>1</sup>

If we place over against this estimate the impression she had made, a few months previously, on a simple naval officer—doubtless much less accustomed to the society of ladies of rank and beauty than was Sir Gilbert Elliot—it may perhaps enable us better to understand the extraordinary effect which she subsequently had upon Nelson. In August 1796 a dinner was given on board the *Petrel*, a small brig of war, to celebrate the Prince of Wales's birthday. Prince Augustus and the principal people in Naples were present. The company sat down, according to the custom of the country, at 1 P.M., when, says the Captain,

Royal toasts, songs, and every kind of mirth filled up the time till five o'clock, in which the tars were not forgotten, for they in their turn drank their royal master and success to the family in their favourite liquor, grog, and afforded the company much entertainment from their songs and their variety of sea amusements. But the loyalty of that exquisite and charming lovely woman, Lady Hamilton, outshone then, as upon every other occasion, the whole party; for in the ecstasy of singing 'God save the King' in full chorus with the whole ship's company she tore her fan to pieces, and threw herself into such bewitching attitudes

<sup>1</sup> Minto, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. p. 364.

that no mortal soul could refrain from believing her to be an enthusiastic angel from heaven, purposely sent down to celebrate this pleasant, happy festival.<sup>1</sup>

Wherever she went, Emma always carried her mother with her, notwithstanding that the widow of the village blacksmith was hardly the sort of person one would expect to find very heartily welcomed in polite society. Mrs. St. George briefly, but significantly, says: 'Mrs. Cadogan, Lady Hamilton's mother, is—what one might expect!' At an entertainment given in honour of the English fleet at Naples, Mrs. Cadogan is reported to have exclaimed, at the drinking of one of the toasts, 'They may talk of their *Lachrymæ Christi* and stuff, but give me a glass of London gin before a whole bottle of it!' Yet she was not only her daughter's cook and companion at Paddington, but also her housekeeper and companion during the time she was the bosom friend of the Queen of Naples. In one of her letters to Greville in 1794 Emma says: 'Mother's love to you. She is the comfort of our lives, and is our housekeeper. Sir William dotes on her.' And a few years later, writing on board the *Foudroyant* to the same correspondent, she adds further particulars—

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of Rear-Admiral Bartholomew James*, p. 294

You cant think how she is loved and respected by all. She has adopted a mode of living that is charming. She as a good apartment in our house, always lives with us, dines, etc. Only when she does not like it (for example at great dinners) she herself refuses, and as always a friend to dine with her. . . . The Queen has been very kind to her in my absence, and went to see her, and told her she ought to be proud of her glorious daughter.<sup>1</sup>

At a later date she became a similar institution in the house of Lord Nelson. Lord Minto speaks of sitting down to dinner some time in 1815 with Nelson, his brother, the Dean, and Mrs. Nelson and her children, when they had 'Lady Hamilton at the head of the table and Mother Cadogan at the bottom.' But this is anticipating matters.

It was in 1796 that the circumstances occurred during which Lady Hamilton is alleged to have rendered Great Britain the first of those two great services which justified Nelson in solemnly leaving her as a legacy to his country. Lady Hamilton's own account of the matter, which has been accepted by Pettigrew, Southey, and other biographers, was to the effect that, learning that a courier had brought a private letter from the King of Spain to the King of Naples, she prevailed on the Queen to abstract this communication from the King's

<sup>1</sup> Jeaffreson, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. p. 117.

possession, and finding that it contained the King of Spain's declaration that he must withdraw from the coalition and join France against England, she, further, persuaded the Queen to allow her to make a copy of the document, and then, as her husband was at the moment lying ill and helpless, she herself immediately despatched this copy by special messenger to Lord Grenville, at a cost of £400 out of her own private purse. That she persuaded Nelson into a belief in this story is, of course, unquestionable. And it is quite possible that something happened which, at a later date, her treacherous memory, aided by her extreme vanity, induced her to believe of much more importance than it really was. But the examination which Mr. Jeaffreson, Professor Laughton, and others have made of the papers in the Morrison Collection, the Egerton MSS. in the British Museum, and the official correspondence from Naples and Spain preserved in the Public Record Office, tends to show, first, that there was no need to persuade the Queen of Naples to divulge anything which touched the interests of Great Britain, seeing that it was her determined policy to do so, and that she had already provided Sir William Hamilton with the key to the cipher in which such documents were usually written;

secondly, that, so far from being able to spend £400 on a special messenger out of her private purse, Lady Hamilton's scanty allowance of £200 a year, paid quarterly, had such calls upon it that, except on quarter-days, she never had so much as £50 to draw upon; and thirdly, although there is some difficulty in identifying the letter on account of a confusion of dates, the document appears to have been sent by Hamilton himself in the usual way.

The story of the second great service by which Nelson declared Emma had earned the gratitude of her country is related by Pettigrew as follows: Captain Troubridge awakened Sir William Hamilton about six o'clock one morning with a request from Nelson that he would procure him permission to enter Naples, or any of the Sicilian ports, to provision, water, etc., as, in default of this, he would have to run to Gibraltar for the purpose, and so lose the pursuit of the French fleet. Hamilton accordingly went to Sir John Acton, the Prime Minister, who immediately called a council to deliberate on the matter. Meanwhile, Lady Hamilton, foreseeing a refusal, went to the Queen, who was still in bed, and, after much urging, induced her to write a letter, which she dictated, 'to all the governors

of the two Sicilies,' ordering them to receive and to supply the British fleet with anything which Nelson might require. The King and Council refused Nelson's application, as Lady Hamilton had foreseen, on the ground that they could not then break with France, and, we are told, Lady Hamilton therefore secretly provided Nelson with the letter which she had extracted from the Queen. But an examination of the official documents demolishes this story also. There was no council. A letter from Sir William Hamilton, preserved in the Foreign Office Records, says that he and Troubridge went together to Sir John Acton, and did more business in half an hour than they could have done in a week in the usual official way, for Acton there and then wrote them the requisite order on his own authority, and Troubridge went off with it in his pocket quite pleased and happy. Moreover, before declaring that his ability to follow the French fleet to Egypt, and consequently the victory of the Nile, were due to an alleged letter obtained by Lady Hamilton, Nelson might surely have remembered that he was at the time in possession of express instructions that, if he could not obtain supplies in Sicily of that country's free will, he was to take what he wanted by force. At the same time, we

need not hastily assume that Lady Hamilton was of no service to her country at all. She was of undoubted service as a go-between, and the incessant correspondence between her and the Queen of Naples served as a veil with which the latter judiciously covered her diplomatic intercourse with the English Ambassador, especially at those times when the French party in Naples made it unsafe for Hamilton to make his appearance at Court. Something more than this, even, might perhaps be justly claimed for her, on the strength of an involuntary tribute to her influence in a letter from the French Ambassador to Bonaparte in 1798, wherein it is said that if only the Prime Minister, Acton, and the wife of the Ambassador, Hamilton, could be removed from Naples, the country would be very useful for the projects which Napoleon then had in the Mediterranean.

The French fleet was destroyed in the early part of August 1798, and in September Naples was thrown into a state of the wildest excitement by the arrival of the victor of the Nile in its beautiful bay. Led by the royal barge, a long procession of boats, with flags and music, rowed out to meet the *Vanguard*. Lady Hamilton was one of the first to rush on board; and when she saw the admiral, with

his head still bandaged, and minus an eye and an arm since their last meeting, she exclaimed, 'O God! is it possible?' and fell fainting into the hero's one remaining arm. Nelson was weak from the effects of his recent wound, and was glad enough to be nursed into sound health by Lady Hamilton at the British Embassy. The misgovernment, the folly, and the treachery of the Neapolitans were quite apparent to him; but he appears to have been greatly flattered by the almost royal honours with which he was received, and under Lady Hamilton's influence he soon came to form a strong attachment to the reigning family. He was drawn into a promise that Naples Bay should never be left without an English man-of-war. During the year and a half following the battle of the Nile he and Lady Hamilton were in constant association with one another, and it cannot be denied that he devoted himself almost exclusively, and sometimes even in defiance of his Commander-in-chief, to the interests of Emma's royal friends. In December, in consequence of circumstances which are matters of history, and need not be detailed here, the King and Queen decided to fly to Palermo. This was a matter of some danger and difficulty, as the *lazzaroni* were bitterly opposed to their King and Queen leaving

the capital, while, at the same time, the King and Queen were equally determined not to go without their money and valuables. But Lady Hamilton, as Captain Mahan well says, was a brave and capable woman, with a good deal of pagan virtue in her make-up, and the whole correspondence relative to this risky business was carried on with great address by her and Maria Caroline, the well-known and constant passing of letters between these two friends averting all suspicion. Royal property to the value of two millions and a half was conveyed to the shore and stowed safely on board the English ships, and on the night of the 21st, Nelson landed and brought the whole royal family, with the Hamiltons, on board the *Vanguard*, which at once set sail for Palermo. Pettigrew gave credence to the story that all the private property of the Hamiltons was left behind and sacrificed to the mob, in order that no suspicion of flight might be aroused by its removal; and Lady Hamilton estimated the loss on this occasion at about £9000 worth of her own, and £30,000 worth of Sir William's property. It has since been discovered that Sir William had taken care to pack the bulk of his treasures and ship them on board the *Colossus*. Although this vessel was subsequently wrecked, sixteen cases were rescued

from the waves, and the contents of these were sold to Mr. Hope, of Deepdene, for 4500 guineas. When Sir William afterwards memorialised Government for compensation, Nelson stated the total estimated loss to be £10,000. As for her ladyship's personal loss, it appears quite certain that she did not possess property of anything like that value, and what little she did possess she managed to carry away with her. Some compensation they received from their Neapolitan friends. When Naples was recaptured, the King and Queen made them presents to the value of £6000, including a richly jewelled portrait of Ferdinand for the husband, and a gold chain with miniature set in diamonds attached, and two coachloads of magnificent dresses for the wife. Pettigrew would have us believe that, in addition to this, Maria Caroline handed her dear friend a document settling on her an annuity of £1000 for life, and that the latter magnanimously destroyed the document, lest her acceptance of such a sum might be misconstrued in England. Seeing that Nelson had no such scruple when, on being created Duke of Bronté, he was also given by their Neapolitan Majesties an estate worth £3000 a year, and remembering other perversions of fact, due either to a superabundance of imagination or a lack of memory, we may be

fairly certain that the document endowing her ladyship with £1000 a year was never destroyed by her, and for the very good reason that it was never in existence.

Nelson's relations with Lady Hamilton at Naples had given rise to a good deal of comment, and some of his officers expressed great concern at the 'many severe paragraphs which have been put in the newspapers' on the subject; but their way of life at Palermo created even greater scandal. Lady Minto, writing to her sister in July 1800, mentions some of the stories she had heard, on good authority, concerning 'the hero and his lady.'

Nelson and the Hamiltons [she writes] all lived together in a house of which he bore the expense, which was enormous, and every sort of gaming went on half the night. Nelson used to sit with large parcels of gold before him, and generally go to sleep, Lady Hamilton taking from the heap without counting, and playing with his money to the amount of £500 a night. Her rage is play, and Sir William says when he is dead she will be a beggar.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Jeaffreson scouts the notion that Lady Hamilton's influence was in the slightest degree detrimental to Nelson, so far as his public actions and his duty to his country were concerned. But

<sup>1</sup> Minto, *op. cit.*, vol. iii. p. 139.

Lord Minto regretfully noticed the discredit which this alliance had brought upon his friend ; and it is too patent to be denied that it caused him on more than one occasion to disobey the orders of Lord Keith, his Commander-in-chief ; that it caused him to miss capturing the *Guillaume Tell*, the last of the French Egyptian fleet, which was taken by Troubridge during one of his admiral's absences with Lady Hamilton ; that in July 1800 it caused Lord Keith roundly to tell the Queen of Naples that Lady Hamilton had had the command of the British fleet long enough ; and that, when Sir William Hamilton was recalled to England, it caused Nelson suddenly to discover that the state of his health required that he should strike his flag and go home likewise.

During their leisurely homeward journey in the closing year of the eighteenth century, Emma was presented by Lady Minto to their Imperial Majesties at Vienna, and the whole party were entertained by Prince Esterhazy for four days at Eisenstadt, where they were daily feasted at a table served by one hundred six-foot-high grenadiers, and Nelson's health was drunk to a flourish of trumpets and the firing of cannon. On their arrival at Dresden, the Electress declined to receive ' the lady of whom she had heard

so much.' But she was made much of at the British Embassy, where another visitor, Mrs. St. George (afterwards Mrs. Trench, and mother of the archbishop of that name), had a favourable opportunity for drawing the full-length portrait which is to be found in her bright and lively little diary. Lady Hamilton, we are told,

is bold, forward, coarse, assuming, and vain. Her figure is colossal, but excepting her feet, which are hideous, well shaped. Her bones are large, and she is exceedingly *embon-point*. She resembles the bust of Ariadne; the shape of all her features is fine, as is the form of her head, and particularly her ears; her teeth are a little irregular, but tolerably white; her eyes light blue, with a brown spot in one, which, though a defect, takes nothing away from her beauty and expression. Her eyebrows and hair are dark, and her complexion coarse. Her expression is strongly marked, variable, and interesting, her movements in common life ungraceful; her voice loud, yet not disagreeable.<sup>1</sup> . . . I think her bold, daring, vain even to folly, and stamped with the manners of her first situation much more strongly than one would suppose, after having represented Majesty, and lived in good company fifteen years.<sup>2</sup>

It is certainly not a friendly portrait; and there are even more disparaging touches. Lady Hamilton's passions are said to be vanity, avarice, and love for

<sup>1</sup> *Journal kept during a Visit to Germany in 1799-1800*. Edited by Dean (afterwards Archbishop) Trench, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. St. George's *Journal*, p. 79.

the pleasures of the table ; her singing in the last degree of bad taste ; her dress loaded, vulgar, and unbecoming ; and her waist absolutely between her shoulders. But with the 'attitudes' Mrs. St. George is charmed, and finds herself unable to account for the undeniable fact that a person so coarse and ungraceful in common life should become so highly graceful, and even beautiful, during their performance. Sir Gilbert Elliot had, a few years previously, noted the same contrast. After seeing the 'attitudes,' he wrote—

They set Lady Hamilton in a very different light from any I had ever seen her in before ; nothing about her, neither her conversation, her manners, nor figure, announce the very refined taste which she discovers in this performance, besides the extraordinary talent which is needed for the execution.<sup>1</sup>

Soon after the arrival of the Hamiltons in London, Nelson's breach with his wife became final ; and after 1801, whenever he was not on active service, he and they lived together in London or at Merton Place, as members of one family, sharing expenses between them. One cannot wonder that their earlier biographers were puzzled by the incongruities of the strange story they had to tell. A few months before his death, Sir William wrote : 'I

<sup>1</sup> Minto, *op. cit.*

know full well the purity of Lord Nelson's friendship for Emma and me.' When he died on April 6, 1803, his pillow was supported by his wife, while his right hand was held by Nelson. And by a final codicil to his will he bequeathed a copy in enamel of Madame le Brun's picture of Emma to 'my dearest friend, Lord Nelson, Duke of Bronté, a very small token of the great regard I have for his lordship, the most virtuous, loyal, and truly brave character I ever met with. God bless him, and shame fall on those who do not say Amen.' Nelson's two sisters, Mrs. Bolton and Mrs. Matcham, with their children, and his brother, the Dean of Canterbury, were, and remained, on friendly and even affectionate terms with Lady Hamilton; and they completely broke with Lady Nelson, of whom her husband declared that nothing in her conduct had ever been other than he would wish it to be. If clearer-sighted or more disinterested friends disapproved, they were diffident of expressing their feelings. Lord Minto, for instance, after a visit to Merton Place in March 1802, thus expresses himself—

The whole establishment and way of life is such as to make me angry as well as melancholy, but I cannot alter it, and I do not think myself obliged or at liberty to quarrel with him for his weakness, though nothing shall ever induce me to

give the smallest countenance to Lady Hamilton. She looks ultimately to the chance of marriage, as Sir W. will not be long in her way, and she probably indulges a hope that she may survive Lady Nelson. . . . She is in high looks, but more immense than ever. She goes on cramming Nelson with trowelfuls of flattery, which he goes on taking as quietly as a child does pap. The love she makes to him is not only ridiculous but disgusting.<sup>1</sup>

For many years there was a mystery as to the parentage of Horatia, and it is always likely to remain a mystery how Sir William Hamilton and others were hoodwinked in the matter. But, without going into the details of the deception, and its unravelment, it must be sufficient to say that (despite Mrs. Gamlin's book of elaborate special pleading on the point) it has now been placed beyond reasonable doubt that the 'adopted' daughter, who was born in January 1801, two years before Sir W. Hamilton's death, was the offspring of Emma and Nelson.

The melodramatic story first told by Harrison in the book he wrote to order for Lady Hamilton, and since given general currency to in the charmingly written but not always accurate *Life*, by Southey, according to which it was Lady Hamilton's patriotic exhortations which induced Nelson to take command

<sup>1</sup> Minto, *op. cit.*, vol. iii. p. 242.

of the fleet immediately before the battle of Trafalgar, has probably no better foundation than her ladyship's lively imagination. It is true, Nelson had had his stores brought up to Merton from the *Victory* in the summer of 1805, and that it was his intention to rest awhile from his labours. He hoped that a victory by Calder (of which he daily expected to hear) would make it unnecessary for him to go out again until October. But as soon as Blackwood brought him the news that Villeneuve had turned up with his squadron at Cadiz, he expressed his instant readiness for action. 'Depend upon it, Mr. Blackwood,' he said, again and again, 'I shall yet give Mr. Villeneuve a drubbing.' That Nelson sometimes became a laggard through Lady Hamilton's influence is unhappily too true; but that it was ever her part to exhort him by appeals to his honour not to shirk what was obviously his duty is not to be believed. In 1804, when he was cruising off Toulon, she, in spite of express orders issued to the fleet that no women were to be allowed on any of the ships, implored to be allowed to go and live on board the *Victory*, and in this, as in other cases, it was he who had to urge her to let motives of interest and affection yield to the stern dictates of duty.

There has been much misrepresentation of Lady

Hamilton's financial position in the latter years of her life. It has been stated that Sir William Hamilton left her totally unprovided for, and more than one writer has referred to her as 'a deserted widow.' But as a matter of fact, Sir William left her a legacy of £800 and an annuity of £800, chargeable on his Swansea estate, together with plate, pictures, furniture, and other things to the estimated value of £5000. In addition to this, from 1803 to the time of his death, Nelson allowed her £1200 a year, to make up for the loss of her husband's pension. And when he died he left her by will a legacy of £2000, an annuity of £500, the Merton estate with house and furniture (valued at between £12,000 and £14,000), and also, for a specified term, the interest on the £4000 which he settled on Horatia. Altogether her total inheritance must have been equal to an income of £2500 a year. But gambling and general extravagance quickly disposed of all her property. Two years after Nelson's death she was £8000 in debt; and in November 1808 a committee of friends arranged the assignment of Merton for the benefit of her creditors, at the same time raising £3700 for her immediate necessities. After the Merton establishment was broken up, she lived first in Clarges Street

and then for a time at Richmond. In 1810 she appears to have been living in Bond Street, and after that with a theatrical friend at Fulham. In 1813 she was arrested for debt, and was domiciled for a time at Temple Place, within the rules of the King's Bench Prison. Thence she escaped in 1814, by the assistance of Mr. Alderman Smith, and took refuge with Horatia at Calais. Pettigrew gave credit to a pathetic story, related to him by a Mrs. Hunter, to the effect that this benevolent lady found Lady Hamilton living in Calais, in the winter of 1814, in absolute want; that she surreptitiously supplied her with food; and when she died, buried her in a deal box, with a pall made out of an old silk petticoat, procuring a half-pay dragoon officer, in the absence of any Protestant minister in Calais, to read the burial service. The story seems to have been a fabrication. After the publication of Mr. Paget's *Paradoxes and Puzzles*, in 1874, Horatia wrote to him affirming most positively that Mrs. Hunter was never known to her.<sup>1</sup> And Lady Hamilton's burial bill, now amongst the documents in the Morrison Collection, shows that she was buried, according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church, in an oak coffin, at a cost, including the

<sup>1</sup> *Blackwood's Magazine*, May 1888.

charge for priests, candles, and church expenses, of £28, 10s., which money was paid by a Mr. Cadogan.<sup>1</sup> And up to September 21, 1814, at any rate, she seems to have been in a position to supply all her reasonable wants comfortably enough; for, writing on that date to her nephew, the Hon. Robert Fulke Greville, asking for £100, part of her annuity in arrear, she adds, by way of postscript:—

The best meat here five pence a pound, 2 quarts of new milk 2 pence, fowl 13 pence a couple, ducks the same. We bought two fine turkeys for four shillings, an excellent turbot for half a crown fresh from the sea, partridges five pence the couple, good Bordeaux wine white and red fifteen pence the bottle, but there are some for ten sous halpeny.<sup>2</sup>

And even if Greville withheld payment of any part of her annuity, on the ground that she had assigned away a portion thereof, she had still the interest of Horatia's £4000 to live upon, and need never have been in actual want. She died on January 15, 1815.

The anonymous author of the *Memoir* of 1815 calls Lady Hamilton a modern Phryne, and Dr. Doran will have her to be a modern Aspasia. Neither comparison is peculiarly felicitous. And Mr. Paget's more recent proposal to place her on

<sup>1</sup> *Morrison Collection*, vol. ii. p. 372.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 370.

an historic pedestal, 'with mingled pride and shame, beside Judith and Joan of Arc,' is simply unintelligible. Her earlier history is unhappily of a by no means uncommon type. Many another young peasant-girl, with the fatal gift of beauty, has come to London, succumbed to temptation, become for a short period the petted mistress of some dissolute aristocrat, and then been cast upon the streets with no prospect before her but that of sinking to the lowest depths of shame. Emma was certainly saved from the lowest depth of degradation by the connoisseur, Greville, who, little as he was worthy of it, inspired her with an ardent and disinterested affection. This emotional experience, combined with the one-sided but real education which he gave her, developed certain natural gifts and hitherto dormant traits in her character, and accident happened to fling her upon a stage where she was able to play a leading part. Mr. Jeaffreson indulged in somewhat indiscriminate raptures over his heroine. There was surely no need to gush through several pages merely because, when she was the wife of Sir William Hamilton, and in receipt of an allowance of £200 a year for what she calls 'nonsense,' she allowed her old grandmother £20 a year instead of leaving

her to starve. And after Emma's *liaisons* with Captain Payne and the dissolute Sussex baronet, however ready we may be to admit her generosity and general truthfulness, we cannot highly applaud the discretion of an advocate who describes her as 'a delicate, pure-minded girl,' and speaks of her 'whiteness of soul.' Nevertheless, Mr. Jeaffreson's book cannot be read without much pity for his heroine; and few will disagree with the verdict of the late Lord Lytton, that 'her letters to Greville are in part extremely touching, evince great warmth of affection, great goodness of heart, and flashes of native talent as well as generosity, contrasting all defects of education and rearing.' The shock caused by Greville's duplicity and cynical indifference seems to have aroused other instincts. Vanity and love of admiration were, and remained to the end, her dominant traits. But the culture she first received in Edgware Row not only developed her fine voice and remarkable powers of mimicry, but revealed an exceptional cleverness in other respects, and begot an ambition which, with unexpected self-control, she steadily set herself to accomplish. The atmosphere of the vile Court of Naples was at the same time unfavourable to her simpler virtues.

Mr. Jeaffreson himself admits that she went there an honest mistress and returned an unfaithful wife. Her natural vanity became colossal with advancing age. Not only did it induce her to believe that she had forced the Queen of Naples to break with France, and so made herself a force in European politics, but in her later days it rose to such a height that she even had hopes of being buried beside Nelson in St. Paul's Cathedral! On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that the exaggerated stories that have received such wide currency as to her extravagant immorality in early life, and her heartless cruelty during the revolution in Naples, have been proved to be unfounded calumnies. Mr. Paget's eulogium, in which we are gravely told that 'had she been less frail, had she possessed fewer virtues or fewer faults, the whole course of history might have been changed, and the Nile, and even Trafalgar, have had no place in the annals of England,'<sup>1</sup> is absurd enough. Although, perhaps, a glance at the splendid illustrations which adorn Mrs. Gamlin's volume<sup>2</sup> will enable

<sup>1</sup> *Blackwood's Magazine*, May 1888.

<sup>2</sup> *Emma, Lady Hamilton*. By Hilda Gamlin. 4to. Liverpool, 1891. A beautifully illustrated volume, produced in the forlorn hope of demonstrating 'the impossibility of Lady Hamilton being Horatia's mother.'

the reader to understand how even a hardened police magistrate, like Mr. Paget, may have arisen from the contemplation of some of Romney's portraits so bewildered by the superlative beauty of the fascinating sitter as to have lost all power of sifting the evidence in her case.





*M<sup>rs</sup> Montagu.*  
*From an Engraving by R. Cooper.*  
*After a Miniature by Zinck.*



## THE QUEEN OF THE 'BLUE-STOCKINGS'

THE origin of the term 'blue-stocking,' has been a matter of some dispute. Boswell tells us in his *Life of Johnson* that

About this time [1781] it was much the fashion for several ladies to have evening assemblies, where the fair sex might participate in conversation with literary and ingenious men, animated by a desire to please. These societies were denominated 'Blue-stocking Clubs,' the origin of which title, being little known, it may be worth while to relate it. One of the most eminent members of those societies, when they first commenced, was Mr. Stillingfleet, whose dress was remarkably grave, and in particular it was observed that he wore blue stockings. Such was the excellence of his conversation, that his absence was felt as so great a loss that it used to be said, 'We can do nothing without the "blue-stockings"'; and thus by degrees the title was established.

Dr. Doran, commenting on this, declares that a 'Blue-stocking Club' never existed; but that the title 'blue-stocking' was conferred in derision upon the ladies referred to by Boswell by some envious

person who was not intellectually distinguished enough to gain admittance to their parties. According to Dr. Brewer, however, the sobriquet is of much greater antiquity. He assures us that so far back as A.D. 1400 there was a society of ladies and gentlemen in Venice who were thus distinguished by the colour of their stockings; that this was the parent of a similar society which, about 1590, became the rage amongst the lady *savantes* of Paris; and that, nearly two centuries later still, the craze came from Paris to London, when 'Mrs. Montagu displayed the badge of the Bas-bleu Club at her evening assemblies.' The balance of probability inclines to show that it was the cerulean hose of the ladies, and not those of Mr. Stillingfleet, which gave rise to the term in England, and that Dr. Doran was in error in assuming it to be merely an outsider's term of disparagement. Mr. Hayward, in his edition of Mrs. Piozzi's *Autobiography*, states that he was allowed to make a copy of some notes of a conversation between a lady (whose name he does not give) and Lady Crewe in 1816, according to which Lady Crewe asserted that her mother (Mrs. Greville), the Duchess of Portland, and Mrs. Montagu were the first to imitate the famous conversation parties of the Rue St. Honoré; that

Madame de Polignac, one of the first guests, came in blue silk stockings, then the newest Paris fashion ; and that all the lady members of Mrs. Montagu's 'club' adopted the mode. In further confirmation of this, it was stated that a French gentleman, writing an account of an evening he had spent at Mrs. Montagu's, expressly mentioned that 'they wear blue stockings as a distinction.'

Whatever may have been the origin of the term by which they were described, it is pretty clear that previous to 1750 no such parties, for the purpose of conversation only, had ever been held in London. There is no reference to anything of the kind in the letters or other writings of Addison, Steele, Swift, or Pope ; and although Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Lady Hérvey, the Duchess of Queensberry, and others, were distinguished and courted as ladies of intellectual taste and ability, no one of them ever seems to have attempted to form anything in the nature of the French *salon*. It is equally certain, whoever may have the credit of being first in the field, that about the year 1770, eleven years, that is, before the date mentioned by Boswell, several ladies were in the habit of holding more or less celebrated assemblies of the kind in London. Hannah More says that they were composed of persons distin-

guished for their rank, talents, or respectable character, and that they differed from other parties only in devoting themselves to conversation instead of cards. But, whether held at Mrs. Vesey's, Mrs. Ord's, Mrs. Thrale's, or Mrs. Montagu's, any party presided over by a lady, or to which ladies as well as scholars were invited, became known as a 'blue-stocking' assembly. Neither Mrs. Ord's nor Mrs. Vesey's parties could bear comparison with those of the other London ladies, to say nothing of those of their French prototypes. But if it be true, as Mr. Hayward says, that only Holland House in its best days would convey to persons living in our time an adequate conception of the circle Mrs. Thrale gathered round her at Streatham, certainly no less praise must be given to 'that brilliant society which quoted, criticised, and exchanged repartees under the rich peacock hangings of Mrs. Montagu,' the fashionable and intellectual lady who was emphatically designated by Johnson himself as indisputably 'Queen of the Blues.' In 1809 Mr. Matthew Montagu, her nephew and heir, published two volumes of his aunt's letters; and in 1813 he followed these up with two more volumes, containing her correspondence down to the year 1761. In 1872 Dr. Doran founded a memoir of Mrs. Montagu on

these documents, which he was happily able to supplement by a batch of her letters, written between the last-named date and her death, which had been picked up in manuscript at a sale of autographs. One wonders that these vivacious letters have never been reprinted; for, with a little judicious pruning, they would form a moderate-sized volume of exceptionally good reading. They show much wit, keen observation, and not a little wisdom; they reveal the growth, almost from childhood to old age, of a piquant as well as admirable personality; and, covering as they do a period of something like seventy-five years, they incidentally throw many an illuminating sidelight on the manners and customs of our forebears in the eighteenth century.

The lady came of a good family. Her father, Matthew Robinson, was descended from a line of Scottish barons, who, from 1610 to 1769, owned the estate of Rokeby, since celebrated as the scene of Sir Walter Scott's well-known poem. Her mother was a beautiful heiress, who brought her young husband more than one substantial estate. Of the twelve children who were born to this happily circumstanced couple, nine survived; and Elizabeth and her sister Sarah grew up in the constant companionship of seven affectionate brothers.

They appear to have all been bright, lively, capable children; and we hear of a sort of family debating society which they instituted among themselves, both girls and boys taking part in the debates, and obeying the rulings of their mother, who presided as 'Mrs. Speaker.' Both the sisters had a literary bent; and Elizabeth is said to have copied out the whole of the *Spectator* before she was eight years old—a task which doubtless to some extent accounts for the precocious facility of her epistolary style. The greater number of the letters she wrote between the ages of twelve and twenty-two, were addressed to a friend five years older than herself, Lady Margaret Cavendish Harley, who in 1734 became Duchess of Portland. Elizabeth's younger years were spent mainly in the country, at one or other of her father's several estates, and she managed to make country-life yield a good deal of amusement, both to herself and to her various correspondents. She was as fond of dancing, she says, as if she had been bitten by a tarantula, and had often gone with her brothers eight miles on a winter evening to dance to the music of a blind fiddler, returning at two in the morning, mightily pleased with her entertainment. In 1738, when living at Horton in Kent, she travelled the same number of miles (pro-

bably to the same place) to see a play; and 'after the play, the gentlemen invited all the women to supper at the inn, where we stayed until two o'clock in the morning.' Even after that hour she was able apparently to enjoy something in the nature of an afterpiece, for she says, 'Before I had gone two miles (on the homeward journey) I had the pleasure of being overturned, at which I squalled for joy.' In relating a similar experience to another correspondent, she adds, 'One visits in the country at the hazard of one's bones; but fear is never so powerful with me as to make me stay at home'; contemplation, as she sagely observes, suiting prodigiously well with the gout or the rheumatism, but 'not being made for a woman on the right side of thirty.' As she was then only eighteen, the time for contemplation must have seemed far enough off. Country-life, however, even for girls, was not entirely made up of plays and dances. Writing to Miss Donellan, this precocious young lady declares:—

I endeavour to drink deep of philosophy, and be wise when I cannot be merry, easy when I cannot be glad, content with what cannot be mended, and patient where there is no redress. The mighty can do no more, and the wise seldom do as much.

In the summer of 1739 she was banished from home for fear she should take the smallpox, which had already attacked her sister; and the company she was then thrown amongst was very little to her taste. 'If things were as in *Æsop's* days,' she writes, 'when beasts could talk, the country might be a place of conversation'; but although she had never yet heard a calf talk like a squire's eldest son, she has seen many a specimen of the latter who talked and looked like a calf. She was therefore, according to her own account, thrown back on former ages for her associates; Cicero's and Plutarch's heroes being the only available company. In this condition of things, the prospect of a visit to Bath was regarded with enthusiasm. But, at any rate on first acquaintance, the gaiety of this celebrated watering-place did not come up to her expectations. Her friend the Duchess of Portland was soon apprised of her experiences.

The day after I arrived, I went to the Ladies' Coffee House, where I heard of nothing but rheumatism in the shoulder sciatica in the hip, and gout in the toe. I began to fancy myself in the hospital or infirmary. . . . 'How d'ye do?' is all one hears in the morning, and 'What is trumps?' in the afternoon. . . . As for the men, except Lord Noel Somerset they are altogether abominable.

A few days later there is more in the same strain:—

I should be glad to send you some news, but all the news of the place would be like the bills of mortality. We hear of nothing but, 'Mr. Such-a-one is not abroad to-day.' 'Oh no,' says another, 'poor gentleman, he died this morning.' Then another cries, 'My party was made for quadrille to-night, but one of the gentlemen has had a second stroke of palsy, and cannot come. . . .' Indeed the only thing one can do to-day we did not do the day before is to die. Not that I would be hurried by a love of variety and novelty to do so irreparable a thing as dying.

Her visits to Bath and to Tunbridge Wells, however, seem to have been a welcome change from the monotony of country-house life; and she possessed the enviable faculty of being always able to carry her own gaiety and high spirits withersoever she went. There were visits to London also, when Vauxhall and Ranelagh were in all their glory; and in 1740 we find her at the Court of St James's, striking up what proved to be a lifelong friendship with Mr. (afterwards Lord) Lyttelton.

About this time Miss Robinson's friends seem to have shown some anxiety to get her settled in life. Her friend the Duchess of Portland had given her the pet nickname of 'Fidget'; and it was admitted on all hands that 'Fidget' was not only a 'most entertaining creature,' but also a beauty, who ought to make a good match. She was much admired for

the peculiar animation and expression of her blue eyes; and her brilliant complexion contrasted well with dark, highly arched eyebrows, and dark brown hair. The miniature of her, in Anne Boleyn costume, painted by Zinck when she was twenty-four, of which an engraving by Cooper is given in the first volume of her letters, certainly shows an extremely pleasing countenance. But the young lady was by no means easy to please in the matter of suitors. War was in the air then as it is now; but soldiers she scoffed at as fops who would die of a panic and save their enemy's powder. Country squires were still less to her taste. 'To love calves one should be a calf,' she contended, and declared herself perfectly assured that the young squires, like calves, really loved a dairymaid much better than the likes of her. As for modern marriages in general, she says, in language which sounds somewhat startling from the mouth of a young damsel of twenty, 'they are great infringers of the baptismal vow; for it is commonly the pomps and vanities of this wicked world on the one side, and the sinful lusts of the flesh on the other.' A year or so previously, she had drawn a sketch of her ideal lover for the Duchess of Portland, adding significantly: 'I never saw one man that I loved.'

The Dean of Canterbury was gravely informed :—

I have lately studied my own foibles, and have found that I should make a very silly wife, and an extremely foolish mother, and so have as far resolved as is consistent with deference to reason and advice, never to trouble any man, or to spoil any children.

But to her sister, who supposed she had bestowed all her love on the heroes of antiquity, she wrote : 'A living man is better than a dead hero'; and 'I believe I shall do my errand before many people think.' That errand she accomplished, very much to her own, and apparently everybody else's satisfaction, in August 1742, when she was married to Edward Montagu, Esquire, M.P. for Huntingdon, who was much older than herself, but acceptable to the young lady's taste, as being a man of culture and considerable intellectual attainments, and to her prudence, as being a very wealthy coal-owner. Young ladies of to-day will learn with some surprise that in the eighteenth century it would have been thought highly improper for a newly married couple to go off on their honeymoon without a chaperon, and that when Mr. and Mrs. Edward Montagu set out for one of the bridegroom's estates in the North, the bride's sister was their travelling companion.

The day after the wedding she wrote to her Duchess :—

I have a great hope of happiness; the world, as you say, speaks well of Mr. Montagu, and I have many obligations to him which must gain my particular esteem; but such a change of life must furnish one with a thousand anxious thoughts.

There was no need for anxiety, as it happened. Their thirty-three years of married life appear to have been highly satisfactory to both parties, though sadly clouded by the death, in infancy, of their only child in 1744. Mr. Montagu was much occupied with his coal-mines, the care of his various estates, and occasionally with his parliamentary duties. His relaxations seem to have been mainly of a mathematical character; but he very wisely left his young wife to do as she pleased, with the result that, although she spent a good deal of time in paying friendly visits to most of the great houses of the country, she also threw herself with enthusiasm into her husband's business affairs. Their correspondence shows that they always remained on friendly and affectionate terms.

Mr. Montagu's Yorkshire neighbours, however, were not to her liking. She tells her Duchess that they are ignorant, absurd, uncouth, and for

the most part drunken and vicious, hypocrites and profligates. She has been fortunate in not having a single person overcome by drink in her house; but most of the poor ladies in the neighbourhood, she declares, have had more hogs in their drawing-room than ever they had in their pigsty! At Sandford, in Berkshire, another of her husband's houses, she found much more congenial society. But, wherever she might be, the salient characteristics of her surroundings, pleasant or unpleasant, are vividly sketched off for the benefit of one or other of her correspondents. While staying at Tunbridge Wells she met Dr. Young, author of the *Night Thoughts*, and wrote a comical account of her first interview with him. He improved on acquaintance, and she really seems to have had much admiration for his conversational power and sterling sense; but she was perpetually poking fun at him. After dining with her one day, he proposed to escort her and another lady to view some fine old ruins a few miles away from the town. The manner of their journey is thus described:—

First rode the Doctor on a tall steed, decently caparisoned in dark grey; next ambled Mrs. Holt on a hackney horse, lean as the famed Rozinante, but in shape more resembling Sancho's ass; then followed your humble servant on a milk-

white palfrey, whose reverence for humankind induced him to be governed by a creature not half as strong, and I fear scarce thrice as wise as himself. By this enthusiasm of his, rather than my own skill, I rode on in safety, and at leisure to observe the company, especially the two figures that brought up the rear. The first was my servant, valiantly armed with two uncharged pistols . . . the last was the Doctor's man, whose uncombed hair so resembled the mane of the horse he rode one could not help imagining they were of kin, and wishing, for the honour of the family, that they had had one comb betwixt them; on his head was a velvet cap, much resembling a black saucepan, and at his side hung a little basket. . . . To tell you how the dogs barked at us, the children squalled, and the men and women stared, would take up too much time.

What the ruins were like we know not, for, happily, in place of an archæological or historical disquisition, she gives us something infinitely more bright and entertaining, namely, a life-like pen-and-ink sketch of the vicar of the place.

The good parson offered to show us the inside of his church, but made some apology for his undress, which was a true canonical dishabille. He had on a grey striped calamanco night-gown; a wig that once was white, but, by the influence of an uncertain climate, turned to a pale orange; a brown hat encompassed by a black hat-band; a band somewhat dirty, that decently retired under the shadow of his chin; a pair of grey stockings, well mended with blue worsted, strong symptoms of the conjugal care and affection

of his wife, who had mended his hose with the very worsted she had bought for her own.

From about 1750 onwards Mrs. Montagu endeavoured to make her husband's town-house in Hill Street the centre of attraction, not only for people of fashion, but for all who were in any way distinguished for their intellectual powers. In fact the people of fashion were at a discount unless they had other claims to her notice. Among the ladies who were oftenest to be found there were the Duchess of Portsmouth, Mrs. Greville (wife of Fulke Greville), Mrs. Boscawen, and Johnson's friend, Mrs. Thrale. But there is frequent mention also of Mrs. Carter, the learned translator of Epictetus; of Mrs. Chapone, a lady whose 'superior mental attainments' were, says Wraxall, unfortunately hidden beneath 'a most repulsive exterior'; of the estimable, if somewhat unduly moralising, Hannah More; and of the modest and retiring, but ever delightful Fanny Burney. Amongst the men, first and foremost, of course, stands the figure of the great Cham of literature, Dr. Johnson. But in his suite were Sir Joshua Reynolds, Burke, Garrick, Horace Walpole, Pulteney (afterwards Earl of Bath), George, first Lord Lyttelton, Robertson, Blair, Gregory, and in fact all the scholars

and literary men of the day. Rising literary aspirants were not neglected; and authors like Beattie, who came to London with his *Minstrel* in 1771, were welcomed with no less cordiality than were distinguished foreigners such as the Abbé Raynal. Mrs. Montagu began with breakfast-parties—a form of literary reunion which survived down to the days of Samuel Rogers and Crabb Robinson. We are indebted to Madame Bocage, a French lady who visited London in 1750, for a description of one of these breakfasts:—

We breakfasted to-day at Lady (*sic*) Montagu's, in a closet lined with painted paper of Pekin, and furnished with the choicest movables of China. A long table, covered with the finest linen, presented to the view a thousand (!) glittering cups, which contained coffee, chocolate, biscuits, cream, butter, toasts, and exquisite tea. You must understand that there is no good tea to be had anywhere but in London. The mistress of the house, who deserves to be served at the table of the gods, poured it out herself.

Madame Bocage adds the interesting detail that the dress of the English ladies at these breakfast-parties included a white apron and a pretty straw hat. The manners of the English ladies, however, seem to have been by no means as pretty as their dress. Mrs. Montagu's sister, writing to her brother in Rome about this time, complains of

the rate at which nobility are being made in England, and adds: 'Lady Townshend says she dare not spit out of her window for fear of spitting on a lord!'

In 1769 appeared Mrs. Montagu's *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakespear*, a reply to Voltaire's jealous strictures on our great dramatist. The little book at first appeared anonymously, but she soon became known as its author, and subsequent editions, of which there were several, were issued under her name. Burke, Reynolds, Lyttelton, Cowper, and others, expressed much admiration for the essay; but Johnson would not admit that there was any real criticism in it. When Reynolds observed that he thought it did her honour, Johnson replied, 'Yes, sir, it does *her* honour, but it would do nobody else honour.' And when Garrick urged that she had at least shown how much Voltaire had mistaken Shakespear, he sarcastically asked, 'What merit is there in that?' adding, 'You may as well praise a school-master for whipping a boy who has construed ill.' Johnson was always ready enough to commend Mrs. Montagu's conversation; but when she ventured into the realm of serious authorship, he was equally ready with his critical bludgeon. The essay

on Shakespeare, however, is not a very illuminating performance; and when Dr. Doran asserts that it may still be read with pleasure, the present writer, for one, is unable to agree with him. There appear to have been others besides Johnson who could not read it through even in 1769. The Dowager Countess Gower wrote from Bill Hill in Berkshire to Mrs. Delany in August of that year :—

I'll change my subject to y<sup>e</sup> witty and gay: ffortune has bless'd y<sup>s</sup> fforest w<sup>th</sup> y<sup>e</sup> genius's of y<sup>e</sup> age. Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Dunbar, &c. &c. and L<sup>d</sup> Littleton are at Suñing Wells, and sport sentim<sup>ts</sup> from morn till noon, from noon to dewy eve. I molest 'em not, contenting myself in my rustick simplicity, 'tis a stupidity y<sup>t</sup> may be felt I don't doubt—but not by me. Mrs. Montagu has commenced author, in *vindication* of Shakspear, who *wants none*, therefore her performance must be deem'd a work of supererogation; some commend it. I'll have y<sup>t</sup>, because I can throw it aside w<sup>n</sup> I'm tired.

Mrs. Montagu had first entered the ranks of authorship some nine years previously, when she contributed (anonymously, of course) three conversations to her friend Lord Lyttelton's *Dialogues of the Dead*. These three dialogues may still be read with a great deal more pleasure than her essay on Shakespeare. No. xxvii. in particular,

between Mercury and a modern fine lady, is at least as good as anything else in Lyttelton's book. Mercury calls upon Mrs. Modish to conduct her across the Styx, and is flatly told that she cannot possibly come, on account of her engagements. When he answers that conjugal attachments and maternal duties, however meritorious they may be, cannot be accepted as an excuse, she sharply tells him that she did not mean anything of that kind, but if he will look on her chimney-piece he will see that she is engaged to the play on Mondays, balls on Tuesdays, the opera on Saturdays, and to card assemblies all the other days of the week. She admits, in answer to his questions, that late hours and fatigue give her the vapours, and that she gets little pleasure out of seeing the same thing over and over again; but her friends had always told her diversions were necessary; and besides, she was ambitious to be thought *du bon-ton*. '*Bon-ton!*' exclaims Mercury, 'what is that, madam? Pray define it.' And Mrs. Modish replies:—

Oh, sir, excuse me; it is one of the privileges of the *bon-ton* never to define, or be defined. It is the child and the parent of jargon. It is—I can never tell you what it is: but I will try to tell you what it is not. In conversation it is not wit;

in manners it is not politeness; in behaviour it is not address; but it is a little like them all. It can only belong to people of a certain rank, who live in a certain manner, with certain persons, who have not certain virtues, and who have certain vices, and who inhabit a certain part of the town. Like a place by courtesy, it gets an higher rank than the person can claim, but which those who have a legal title to precedence dare not dispute, for fear of being thought not to understand the rules of politeness. Now, sir, I have told you as much as I know of it, though I have admired and aimed at it all my life.

Mercury regrets to hear that she has neglected her husband's happiness and her children's education for this nothing which is called *bon-ton*. But she hastens to assure him that she has spared no expense on her daughters' education; they have had a dancing-master, a drawing-master, and a French governess to teach them behaviour and the French language. Mercury, unfortunately, does not give us his views on the education of girls, but contents himself with telling Mrs. Modish that her system is calculated to make her daughters 'wives without conjugal affection, and mothers without maternal care.' He is sorry for the life Mrs. Modish has led, and sorry for what she is likely to lead in the future; hinting that she need not look for a Vauxhall and a Ranelagh in the Elysian Fields, as Minos has

little sympathy with the *bon-ton*, and will probably push the like of her into Tartarus! The Mrs. Modish dialogue was a great favourite with the town; and must certainly be admitted to be both good sense and fine satire.

In 1772 she spent a few days with Burke at Beaconsfield, finding the great man in his home to be an industrious farmer, a polite husband, a kind master, a charitable neighbour, and a most excellent companion. 'I have always found,' she remarks, 'that nothing is so gentle as the chief out of war, nor so serene and simple as the statesman out of place.' We are in the habit of thinking that it was our penny-post and halfpenny-press which abolished the art of letter-writing; but in 1773 we find her complaining that the art is already in its decline. In her early days, she says, she was a punctual (and, she might have added, prolific) correspondent; but lately she has come to feel that letter-writing is wasted labour.

When newspapers only told weddings, births, and burials, a letter from London bore some value; but now that the public papers not only tell when men are born and dye, but every folly they contrive to insert between those periods, the literary correspondent has nothing left. Lies and dulness used to be valued in manuscript, but printing has assumed a right over the lies of the day and the amusements of the hour.

Having no children of her own, Mrs. Montagu displayed much interest in the welfare of her nephews and nieces, endeavouring to have them brought up according to her own notions of a fitting education. They always stayed at one of Mr. Montagu's houses during their vacations, and there are frequent kindly references to them throughout the letters. She was also a very capable woman of business. She declares that at one time she nearly put her eyes out with accounts, as that diligent person, her steward, expected her at certain times of the year to devote many hours a day to them. Her letters contain many references to farming, as well as other cognate matters, which show that she was a most industrious help-mate to her husband. In December 1766 she writes from Denton Castle, in Northumberland:—

Business has taken up much of my time, and as we had farms to let against next May-day, and I was willing to see the new colliery begin to trade to London before I left the country, I had the prudence to get the better of my taste for society. I had this day the pleasure of a letter from Billingsgate (a polite part of the world for a lady to correspond with) that the first ships which were then arrived were very much approved. At Lynne they have also succeeded, and these are the two great coal markets. So now, as soon as I can get all the ends and bottoms of our business wound up, I shall set out for Hill Street.

In 1775 Mr. Montagu died, leaving the whole of his fortune, with the exception of a single legacy of £3000, to his widow. Horace Walpole wrote to Mason, in his usual flippant style, 'The husband of Mrs. Montagu of Shakespeareshire is dead, and has left her an estate of £7000 a year in her own power. Will you come and be a candidate for her hand? I conclude it will be given to a champion at some Olympic games, and were I she, I would sooner marry you than Pindar.' Mrs. Montagu, however, required nobody to manage her estate, or assist in spending her money. A month or so after her husband's death we find her travelling north to deal in person with her new possessions. 'As Mr. Montagu had been always a very good landlord,' she tells her sister-in-law, 'I thought it right to show the good people they would have a kind landlady.' She therefore went over her farms, made personal acquaintance with the tenants, and invited them all to dine with her at some neighbouring inn. The Yorkshire farmers pleased her, as being a very different sort from those to be found in the south of England, the men more alert in their business, and the wives and daughters less given to ape the fine lady. And if her tenants knew their business, so, apparently, did she know hers. 'It is wickedness to

let farms too dear,' she says, 'but it is also folly to let them too cheap.' So she seems to have got as much as she could for them, assuring herself that her Yorkshire tenants, while always willing to give as good a rent as their place deserved, were much too well aware of the nature of the undertaking to give any more. She did not even shrink from visiting her colliery; although the folk in that neighbourhood were much 'too rustick' for her liking, and spoke a dialect that was 'dreadful to the nerves.' It took her some time to get reconciled to seeing her fellow-creatures descend into the dark regions of the earth, and she says she was much comforted when she heard them singing in the pits. It was one of her maxims that 'nobody lives out of the world who is fit to live in it'; and in 1781 she began the building of Montagu House, her 'palace' as it came to be called, in Portman Square, where she entertained with great hospitality and splendour until old age and growing infirmities rendered her unequal to the effort.

Mrs. Montagu's acquaintanceship with Johnson lasted, off and on, for over a quarter of a century. In 1759 she began to pay an annual allowance to his old friend and pensioner, Mrs. Williams. Some years later he gave her offence by taking no notice

of a card of invitation which she sent him. In 1775, hearing that she was detained in London by illness, he addressed her in extremely complimentary terms :—

To have you detained among us by sickness is to enjoy your presence at too dear a rate. I suffer myself to be flattered with hope that only half the intelligence is true, and that you are now as well as to be able to leave us, and so kind as not to be willing.

A few days later, on hearing that she has expressed a wish to see him, he says that if she will be pleased to accept of him after a certain specified date, 'till I am favoured with your answer, or despair of so much condescension, I shall suffer no engagement to fasten itself upon me.' In 1778 he felt that he was not altogether in her good graces—perhaps because he was conscious of having been extremely rude to her. Fanny Burney notes in her diary for that year that at Streatham one day he was complaining that she would not talk, when Mrs. Thrale slyly struck in—'To-morrow, sir, Mrs. Montagu dines here, and then you will have talk enough.' Dr. Johnson, says Miss Burney, began to see-saw, with a countenance expressive of inward fun, and, after enjoying his thoughts for some time in silence, suddenly turned to her and cried :—

'Down with her, Burney!—down with her!—spare her not!—attack her, fight her, and down with her at once! You are a rising wit, and she is at the top; and when I was beginning the world, the joy of my life was to fire at all the established wits! and then everybody loved to halloo me on. But there is no game now: but then, when I was new, to vanquish the great ones was all the delight of my poor little dear soul! So, at her, Burney—at her and down with her!'

After this outburst Mrs. Thrale took occasion to remind the great Cham that he had put Mrs. Montagu out of countenance the last time she came, and got him to promise that on the morrow he would not contradict her. Moreover, on Mrs. Thrale asserting that Mrs. Montagu was 'the first woman for literary knowledge in England, and if in England, I hope I may say in the world,' the burly Doctor conceded, 'I believe you may, madam. She diffuses more knowledge in her conversation than any woman I know, or, indeed, almost any man.' The publication of his *Life of Lyttelton* in 1781, however, gave such offence to Mrs. Montagu that there was a declaration of war between them. He one day remarked to Boswell: 'Mrs. Montagu has dropt me. Now, sir, there are people whom one would very well like to drop, but would not be dropped by.' Fanny Burney reports a violent

quarrel which Johnson had, sometime in the course of this or the following year, at the Thrales' house, with a Mr. Pepys, on the same subject of his *Life of Lyttelton*, and describes the concern which was felt lest he should behave in a similar manner to Mrs. Montagu, whom he called the head of the set of Lytteltonians, and 'Queen of the Blues,' Mr. Pepys being only her prime minister. When they met, Mrs. Montagu was very stately, and turned stiffly away from Johnson, without even courtesying to him, evidently firm in her resolve to speak to him no more. But he went up to her, and said roughly, 'Well, madam, what's become of your fine new house? I hear no more of it.' And, according to Miss Burney, the great dame was so frightened that she answered him, and was as civil as ever. Certainly, a little later on, when he wrote to inform her of the death of his and her pensioner, Mrs. Williams, he received a very kind answer, and peace was proclaimed again. According to Wraxall, Johnson was the mainstay of all the 'blue-stockings' parties. 'I have seen the Duchess of Devonshire,' he declares, 'then in the first bloom of youth, hanging on the sentences that fell from Johnson's lips, and contending for the nearest place to his chair.' And after his death in 1784, it was the impossibility

of finding any one to supply his place which caused such assemblies to die out by degrees.

When Fanny Burney first saw Mrs. Montagu, the latter was verging on sixty years of age; and the young author of *Evelina* describes her as middle-sized, very thin, infirm-looking, with a sensible and penetrating countenance, and the air and manner of a woman of great parts, who was accustomed to being distinguished. At a conversazione at the Thrales' some little time after, the same writer neatly says, 'Mrs. Montagu was brilliant in diamonds, solid in judgment, critical in talk.' Sir William Wraxall, who first met Mrs. Montagu in 1776, says that she was in good preservation, and did not look her age. She possessed great natural cheerfulness and a flow of animal spirits; led the conversation, and talked well on almost every subject; but appeared to him satirical and severe, rather than amiable and inviting, with a manner somewhat too sententious and dictatorial. He calls her the Madame du Deffand of the English capital, whose house constituted the central point of union for all who already were known, or who aspired to be known, for their talents and productions. But, in his view, her social supremacy was established on more solid foundations than those of intellect; and he thinks she owed her distinction

not more to the lustre of her talents than to the sumptuousness of her dinner-table. There was nothing womanly about her, he says; and then, almost in the same breath, draws attention to a characteristically feminine weakness.

Destitute of taste in disposing the ornaments of her dress, she nevertheless studied or affected those aids more than would seem to have become a woman professing a philosophic mind. . . . Even when approaching to fourscore, this female weakness still accompanied her; nor could she relinquish her diamond necklace and bows . . . the perpetual ornament of her emaciated person. I used to think that these glittering appendages of opulence sometimes helped to dazzle the disputants whom her arguments might not always convince.

As age crept on, her parties and visits became fewer; but in 1785 we hear of her making an appearance at one of the Queen's drawing-rooms, and—happily without any serious result—falling down the stairs. Her health was not robust, and she found much comfort in a one-horse chair which was made under the supervision and according to the design of Sir Richard Jebb, her physician. About this date she announces with much complacency that her favourite nephew (who was also her heir) is to be married to a young lady who is 'so formed and qualified as to please both the fancy and the judgment,' being the fortunate possessor of £45,000

and contingencies, as well as an excellent understanding, a pleasing countenance, and gentle and unaffected manners. The young couple were duly married at 'Marybonne' Church in July 1785; and she carried them off from the church door with her, in a post-chaise-and-four, to Sandleford, whence, after a short time, she reports the party as 'three as happy people as can be found in any part of the habitable globe.' The proverb about two being company and three none was apparently unknown in the eighteenth century, at least in Mrs. Montagu's circle.

The old vivacity never altogether disappeared from her letters, though they grew fewer in number. Charles Fox was reported to be in a very bad state of health; and she writes to her sister-in-law to say :—

His rapid journeys to England, on the news of the King's illness, have brought on him a violent complaint in the bowels, which will, it is imagined, prove mortal. However, if it should, it will vindicate his character from the general report that he has no bowels, as has been most strenuously asserted by his creditors.

Twice or thrice a week, she says, she invites seven or eight agreeable persons to dine with her, but scarcely ever goes out the house from fear of the

cold winds. But the old entertaining spirit would occasionally flicker up. On the occasion of the opening of her two great additional rooms at Montagu House—the 'room of cupidons,' which was painted with roses and jasmine intértwined with cupids, and the 'feather room,' which was enriched with hangings made by herself from the plumage of almost every kind of bird—Horace Walpole reports her as more splendid than ever, and as giving a breakfast to seven hundred people. He adds, 'The King and Queen had been with her last week. I should like to have heard the oration she had prepared on the occasion.' In 1798, however, Dr. Burney writes to his daughter that Mrs. Montagu is broken down, very feeble, and wholly blind, receiving no company, and spending her evenings in hearing her servant read. She died on August 25, 1800, at Montagu House, when within a few weeks of completing her eightieth year. Fanny Burney thought her a character rather to respect than to love. Hannah More seems to have been able to do both. Writing some years after her friend's death, Hannah said :—

With Mrs. Montagu's faults I have nothing to do. Her fine qualities were many. From my first entrance into a London life till her death, I ever found her an affectionate,

zealous, and constant friend, as well as a most instructive and pleasant companion.

A specimen or two may perhaps be given of the many lively notices of more or less well-known people which are to be found in Mrs. Montagu's letters. When Lady Mary Wortley Montagu returned from the East, she appeared 'a very singular person, who neither thinks, speaks, acts, or dresses like anybody else.' And her house is said to be like the Tower of Babel.

An Hungarian servant takes your name at the door; he gives it to an Italian, who delivers it to a Frenchman, the Frenchman to a Swiss, and the Swiss to a Polander; so that by the time you get to her ladyship's presence you have changed your name five times, without the expense of an act of parliament.

At the subscription masquerade, to which Mrs. Montagu went in the dress of the 'Queen Mother,' we are informed that Miss Chudleigh appeared in a dress, or rather undress, which was very remarkable.

She was Iphigenia for the sacrifice; but so naked, the high priest might easily inspect the entrails of his victim. The maids of honour (not of maids the strictest) were so offended they would not speak to her.

A note on the death of the Duke of Bedford in 1771 is in a severer strain.

He departed singing the 104th Psalm. This shows he had some piety, but I think his Grace sang out of tune ; so I am not an admirer of his singing. I like a psalm-singing cobbler, in death as well as in life. A poor man who has maintained a wife and children by his labour, has kept the Ten Commandments, observed the Sabbath . . . and lived kindly with his neighbours, may sing his own requiem with a comfortable and cheerful assurance. Of him to whom little is given, little shall be required. But the debtor and creditor of a long account is not so easily settled. Wealth, titles, power, give a great influence in society. . . . Has the commonwealth been served equal to its great demands on a Duke of Bedford ?

Her own wealth was administered according to rigid notions of justice, which, however, did not exclude a most munificent charity. It was, indeed, no mere subscriber to charity-lists who annually gave a feast to the little chimney-sweepers of London, every first of May, on the lawn in front of Montagu House. When Boswell once accused her of being generous from vanity, Johnson rebuked him by saying, 'I have seen no beings who do as much good from benevolence as she does from whatever motive.' She had a wholesome horror of debt.

My house [she writes] never appeared to me so noble, so splendid, so pleasant, so convenient, as when I had paid off every shilling of debt it had incurred. The worst of haunted houses are those haunted by duns.

And one of her letters contains a keen saying, apropos of a school and an almshouse founded by Dr. Robinson. 'Our uncle did this good while he was alive,' is her comment. 'It was not that soul-thrift that would save itself with another's money.' She had a good deal of that worldly wisdom which, as Bacon says, comes home to men's business and bosoms. 'Virtue, wisdom, honours, prosperity, happiness, are all to be found on the turnpike-road, or not to be found at all,' is one of her maxims. Another is: 'Be assured that the wisest persons are the least severe, and the most virtuous are the most charitable.' The great world, she held, can give us nothing more than vagrant amusement for idle hours; one must have one's solid comforts at home. In a letter to one of her adopted daughters she says:—

The chief honour and felicity of my life has been derived from the superior merit of my friends. Principles, opinions, habits, are acquired from those with whom we live and converse most. . . . Be cautious, be delicate, be a little ambitious, my dear niece, in the choice of your friends.

It must be admitted, that she was sometimes a trifle too pedantic in her serious moments; but it is her lighter touches which are most characteristic; such as: 'Solomon said of laughter, What is it? and

of mirth, What doeth it? Vanity and a good set of teeth would have taught him the ends and purposes of laughing'; or her remark, apropos of a piece of the then fashionable shell-work ornamentation which she and a friend proposed to do: 'I think a looking-glass properest for our first work, as everybody will be sure to find something they like in it'; or the excellent reason given for the success of her parties—that no idiots were ever invited. And of her correspondence, whether gay or grave, we may say what Johnson said of her conversation—that it is always full of meaning.

## ‘THE MOST GORGEOUS LADY BLESSINGTON’

THOSE who are old enough to remember certain characteristic products of early Victorian literature known as ‘Books of Beauty’ and ‘Keepsakes’—wherein portraits of living beauties, by the most distinguished artists, were accompanied by a good deal of rather inferior letterpress—may perhaps have some recollection of the immense vogue enjoyed by their distinguished editor, so felicitously described by eccentric Dr. Parr as ‘the most gorgeous Lady Blessington.’ For nearly twenty years Lady Blessington’s name was constantly before the public. She was the author of sixteen or seventeen books which had a considerable, though fleeting, popularity; for fifteen years she was editor of the fashionable ‘Annuals’ already referred to; for nineteen years her house in London was the habitual resort of all who were most distinguished in literature, politics, science, and art; her entertainments were luxurious and splendid; and she was, moreover, a remarkable



*Printed by A. Marshall & Co.*

*Lady Blessington.  
From the Picture by Sir Thomas Lawrence.*



beauty, whose fair fame had been tainted by the breath of scandal. Widely divergent views of her character have been presented to us. Mr. Grantley Berkeley, for example, paints her as an immoral, illiterate, unscrupulous adventuress; while her latest eulogist, Mr. Fitzgerald Molloy, makes her out an almost perfect saint. The whole truth respecting certain episodes in her life is not, and is never likely to be, known; but the story which her biographer had to tell is at least as romantic as that of the heroine of any of her own novels. Unfortunately, the telling of that story fell into very incompetent hands; and whoever has been compelled to read through ‘that confused compilation calling itself *Memoirs of Lady Blessington*,’ which was published by her friend and physician, Dr. Madden, in 1855, may well agree with Mrs. Carlyle that ‘of all that is sad to think of in that poor, kind-hearted woman’s life, this last fatality of falling into the hands of such a biographer seems to me the saddest of all,’ even if they stop short of wishing, as that vivacious lady did, that Captain Maclean’s black cook had carried out his intention of poisoning this Madden!

Marguerite, who was born on September 1, 1789, was the third child and second daughter of Edmund Power, a ‘squireen’ of Knockbrit, near Clonmel, in

co. Tipperary. As a child she seems to have been remarkable, first, as the one plain member of an exceedingly handsome family; and secondly, as an improvisatrice, whose precocious powers of story-telling were the wonder of the neighbourhood. Her mother appears to have thought less of her children than of her pedigree; 'Me ancestors, the Desmonds,' were her household gods, and their deeds and prowess her favourite theme. Whether her father was also equally proud of his ancestors is not on record; but, whatever they may have been like, he can hardly have been a credit to them. He was known far and wide as 'Buck Power,' and also, in consequence of his habit of swaggering about in buckskins, top-boots, lace and ruffles, and a white cravat, by the name of 'Shiver-the-Frills.' He was a man of extremely violent temper, verging on insanity; and when he was appointed magistrate for Waterford and Tipperary he provoked hatred amongst all around him, besides being a terror to his own family. His days and nights were spent in the congenial occupation of riding about the country, accompanied by troops of dragoons, hunting down the unfortunate and misguided 'rebels,' who, not unnaturally, retaliated by burning his store-houses, destroying his plantations, and killing his

cattle. In 1807 he was tried for the murder of a peasant whom he had shot, and narrowly escaped being convicted. No pay attached to his office, but visions of a prospective baronetcy inflamed his cruel zeal, and likewise induced him to indulge in a profuse and reckless hospitality which did much to bring him to ruin.

By the time she had arrived at the age of fourteen it became evident that Marguerite was not to be without her share of the family beauty, and she had already shown herself to possess something more than the average of the family intelligence. About this time, two officers of the 14th Regiment, then stationed at Clonmel—Captain Murray and Captain Farmer—paid her marked attention. After a short acquaintance, Captain Murray proposed marriage to the young lady, but she blushinglly declined, on the ground that she was far too young to think of such a thing. The other cavalier, perceiving that the young lady herself was none too favourably disposed towards him, made his proposal to the father, who, without so much as troubling to acquaint his daughter with the fact, instantly accepted Captain Farmer as his future son-in-law. Tears, entreaties, prayers, were of no avail, and at the age of fourteen and a half Marguerite was married to a man whom

she detested, and who, moreover, was reported to be subject to fits of insanity of so violent a character as to endanger the safety of those around him, as well as his own. In after-years she told Mr. Madden, her future biographer, that her husband frequently treated her with personal violence, that he used to strike her on the face, pinch her till her arms were black and blue, lock her up whenever he went abroad, and often leave her without food until she was almost famished. Grantley Berkeley tells another story; and expresses much pity for 'poor Farmer,' who, he considers, was driven to drink and other excesses by the vagaries of his little minx of a wife; but what authority he had for any such statement does not appear. At any rate, three months after their marriage, when Captain Farmer was ordered to join his regiment on the Curragh of Kildare, Marguerite refused to accompany him, and returned to the house of her father. This was in March 1804. Finding herself an extremely unwelcome guest, she soon left her father's house; but what happened to her, or how she lived, during the succeeding twelve years has not been ascertained with any degree of certainty. Her sister, Mary Anne, who prefixed a memoir to Lady Blessington's posthumous story, *Country Quarters*, professes her

inability to give any account of this period. All she can say is that

Mrs. Farmer resided principally in England, in the most complete seclusion, indulging to the utmost her natural love of study, to which she devoted the greater portion of her time.

Grantley Berkeley, as is usual with him, places the worst possible construction on the matter, and not obscurely hints at very scandalous doings; but, as before, he quotes no authority for his statements. In 1807 she appears to have been, for a time, with some friends at Cahir, and, in 1809, in Dublin. But by the first-named year the ugly duckling had developed, at the age of eighteen, into so swanlike a beauty that Sir Thomas Lawrence was induced to paint her portrait. Nine years later, in 1816, we find her established, with her brother Robert, in a house in Manchester Square, London. Her sister says :—

She received at her house only those whose age and character rendered them safe friends, and a very few others on whose perfect respect and consideration she could wholly rely. Among the latter was the Earl of Blessington, then a widower.

In October 1817, Captain Farmer was killed by a fall from a window in the course of a drunken

orgy with some of his friends in the King's Bench Prison; and four months later the happily released widow became Countess of Blessington.

Lord Blessington was an Irish landlord with a rent-roll of £30,000 a year, and a strong propensity for profuse and extravagant expenditure, a disposition which his newly wedded wife was only too ready to encourage. She was generous, to lavishness, says her sister. Every member of her family instantly felt the change in her fortunes, and, notwithstanding their unkind treatment of her, her now ruined parents were supported by her in comfort to the end of their days. As a young man Lord Blessington had been devoted to the drama, was a familiar figure in greenrooms, and had swallowed the flattery which told him he had himself a first-rate talent for the stage. He had erected a theatre on his estate, and frequently had actors and actresses down from Dublin during the shooting season. But the performances do not appear to have been altogether satisfactory, for we learn that a set of mock resolutions was drawn up for the benefit of the actors, of which the following—levelled principally at Crampton, who was always imperfect in his part—may serve for a specimen: 'That every gentleman shall be at liberty to avail himself of the

words of the author in case his own invention fails him.’ Whether Lord Blessington had any histrionic talent or not, he had certainly acquired a pronounced taste for theatrical costumes, gaudy dresses, and gorgeous ornaments, which he indulged in various ways to the end of his life. When he took his wife to Mountjoy Forest, immediately after their marriage, she found that he had had her private sitting-room ‘hung with crimson Genoa silk-velvet, trimmed with gold bullion fringe, and all the furniture of equal richness.’ But she had no notion of burying herself in an Irish country-house, however splendid, and in a very short time we find them back in London, where, to use Grantley Berkeley’s words, at the age of twenty-eight she blazed like a meteor upon the town in a magnificent mansion in St. James’s Square; and for the next three years her rooms were nightly crowded with people of distinction—royal dukes, cabinet ministers, wits, painters, poets, actors, and authors, who thronged to pay their homage to her ‘gorgeous’ charms. Lord Blessington seems to have been a naturally amiable man, with many good qualities, and was bright and lively enough, if not particularly brilliant. In Moore’s *Diary* for 1819 there are many entries such as, ‘Dined at Lord

Blessington's,' or 'Called to-day upon Lord Blessington, and sat some time with him'; and occasionally we find quoted a specimen of his lordship's Irish humour:—

R. Power and I dined at Lord Blessington's. Lord B. mentioned a good story of an Irishman he knew, saying to a dandy who took up his glass to spy a shoulder of mutton, and declared he had never seen such a thing before, 'Then, I suppose, sir, you have been chiefly in the *chop line*.'

But at the age of forty, according to Mr. Madden, he was *blasé* and exhausted; and Lady Blessington persuaded him to try an extended continental tour. Accordingly, in August 1822, they left London. 'No Irish nobleman probably,' says Madden, 'and certainly no Irish king, ever set out on his travels with such a retinue of servants, with so many vehicles and appliances of all kinds, to ease, to comfort, and luxurious enjoyment in travel.' They went by easy stages. While in France, Lord Blessington persuaded young Count D'Orsay to join them on their tour; and we may presume the inducements held out were of no ordinary character, for D'Orsay at once resigned his commission, although the French army was then under orders to invade Spain; and in February 1823 set out with them for Italy. April and May were passed at Genoa, in

almost daily intercourse with Lord Byron, affording Lady Blessington abundant opportunity for recording her conversations with the poet—which she published in book-form some ten years later. Moore tells us in his *Life of Byron* that Lady Blessington ‘conferred most important services’ upon his noble friend, in that she half revived his old regard for his wife, and, by her admonitions, placed something of a check on the composition of *Don Juan*. But it seems probable that Moore had no authority other than her own for the statement, and that she somewhat overrated her own influence. The company of the Blessingtons was, however, an evident pleasure and relief to Byron, and to Count D’Orsay, in particular, he took a great liking.

From Genoa they went to Rome; but the Eternal City did not please her ladyship. In her diary she says she was driven from Rome by the excessive heat, and, although without fear for herself, by apprehensions that the prevalent malaria might attack some of those dear to her. Her friend and biographer, Madden, rather unkindly remarks on this that Lady Blessington, both in conversation and in writing, was just a little bit given to posing, with a view of acquiring the esteem of others by

an exhibition of her altruistic virtues, and suggests that there were more weighty reasons for her hurried departure from Rome. Her ladyship had become exceedingly fastidious in her tastes. The difficulty of pleasing her in house accommodation, in dress, in cookery especially (!), had become so formidable, and occasioned so many inconveniences, that, in short, he is inclined to regard the malaria scare as an afterthought. Naples, however, was found to be her ideal city, and she was fortunate enough to secure the Palazzo Belvidere for her temporary residence. In *The Idler in Italy* she describes this palace with some enthusiasm :—

A long avenue entered by an old-fashioned archway, which forms part of the dwelling of the *intendente* of the Prince di Belvidere, leads through a pleasure-ground, filled with the rarest trees, shrubs, and plants, to the Palazzo, which forms three sides of a square, the fourth being an arcade which connects one portion of the building with the other. There is a courtyard and fountain in the centre. A colonnade extends from each side of the front of the palace, supporting a terrace covered with flowers. The windows of the principal salons open upon a garden, formed on an elevated terrace, surrounded on three sides by a marble balustrade, and enclosed on the fourth by a long gallery, filled with pictures, statues, and bassi-relievi. On the top of the gallery, which is of considerable length, is a terrace, at the extreme end of which is a pavilion, with open arcades

and paved with marble. This pavilion commands a most enchanting prospect of the bay, with the coast of Sorrento on the left, Capri in the centre, with Nisida, Procida, Ischia, and the promontory of Misenium to the right; the foreground filled up by gardens and vineyards. The odour of the flowers in the grounds around the pavilion, and the Spanish jasmine and tuberoses that cover the walls, render it one of the most delicious retreats in the world. The walls of all the rooms are literally covered with pictures; the architraves of the doors of the principal rooms are oriental alabaster and the rarest marbles; the tables and consoles are composed of the same costly materials; and the furniture, though in decadence, bears the traces of its pristine splendour.

Her ‘most gorgeous’ ladyship, after this rather auctioneer-like description, remarks that there was also a chapel and a billiard-room; and yet she was not altogether satisfied. Although the rent of the place was extravagantly high, and the Blessingtons only proposed to stay a few months, they called in an upholsterer, and went to much further expense in providing a variety of luxurious additions, before they felt they could settle down in the Neapolitan palace in comfort. Creature comforts, however, were by no means the only things which her ladyship desired—and got. As Madden says, when she visited Herculaneum, she was accompanied by no less an authority than Sir William Gell; when she examined museums and art galleries, she was shown

over them by Unwins, the painter, or Westmacott, the sculptor, or Milligan, the antiquary; when she paid a visit to the observatory, it was in the company of Sir John Herschell, or the famous Italian astronomer, Piazzi.

A desirable, and highly appreciated, addition to the party at the Palazzo Belvidere was young Charles James Mathews, a youth of twenty, then just out of his articles to Pugin, the architect, and afterwards to become so justly famous on the stage. Lord Blessington, whose income ought certainly to have been multiplied by ten to keep pace with his notions of expenditure, had proposed, immediately after his second marriage, to build a castle on his Tyrone estate, and had asked young Mathews, with whose father he was well acquainted, to prepare plans for him. For a couple of months, Mathews says, he led a charmed life, diplomatically acquiescing in all the whims of Lord Blessington, who wanted to design the castle himself and kept suggesting alteration after alteration. The castle was never built. But Mathews had his fill of stag-hunting, rabbit-shooting, fishing, and sight-seeing, and was heartily sorry when the fun was over. However, Lord Blessington did not abandon the project, and as he wished to have the plans com-

pleted under his own eye, Mathews went out to Italy for this purpose, and appears to have had another good time of it for nearly two years. He describes the party which he found domiciled at the Palazzo Belvidere :—

Lady Blessington, then in her zenith, and certainly one of the most beautiful, as well as one of the most fascinating, women of her time, formed the centre figure in the little family group assembled within its precincts. Count D’Orsay, then a youth of nineteen, was the next object of attention, and I have no hesitation in asserting, was the beau-ideal of manly dignity and grace. He had not then assumed the marked peculiarities of dress and deportment which the sophistications of London life subsequently developed. He was the model of all that could be conceived of noble demeanour and youthful candour; handsome beyond all question; accomplished to the last degree; highly educated, and of great literary acquirements; with a gaiety of heart and cheerfulness of mind that spread happiness on all around him. His conversation was brilliant and engaging, as well as instructive. He was, moreover, the best fencer, dancer, swimmer, runner, dresser, the best shot, the best horseman, the best draughtsman of his age. . . . Then came Miss Power, Lady Blessington’s younger sister, somewhat demure in aspect, of quiet and retiring manners, contrasting sweetly with the more dazzling qualities around her.

Mathews does not give us a full-length portrait of the Earl, but from an odd touch, here and there, we learn that his lordship ‘always cut his own hair

with a pair of scissors!' (it is difficult, by the way, to imagine what else he could have cut it with); and that he was so susceptible of cold that, according to D'Orsay, he would detect a current of air caused by a key being left crossways in the keyhole of a door! The whole party frequently sailed about the Bay of Naples in the *Bolivar*, which Lord Blessington had bought from Byron before leaving Genoa. Sometimes they would be becalmed from dusk until two or three o'clock in the morning, and then Lady Blessington and D'Orsay would relieve their tedium by bantering the poor captain of the yacht. He was a naval lieutenant named Smith, who had a grievance against the Admiralty for not having 'posted' him fifteen years before, and they fooled him to the top of his bent regarding his claims to promotion, and the disgraceful lack of patronage for real merit. D'Orsay would say, in his broken English, 'Ah, my poor Smid, tell Miladi over again, my good fellow, once more explain for Mademoiselle Power, too, how it happens that Milords of the Admirals never posted you.' And the unsuspecting Smith would again and again be induced to make a ludicrous exhibition of himself, while they all listened without betraying their intense amusement by so much as the ghost of a smile. Lady Blessington

had a very pretty talent for grave banter, and much skill in drawing out an extravagant or eccentric person into a display of oddity or absurdity; but Madden says that she did this with such singular skill, tact, finesse, and delicacy of humour, that pain was never inflicted, so that while she and those in the secret were immensely amused, the victim seldom suspected that any trick was being played upon him. Their stay in Naples was prolonged to two years and a half; and at the end of that time they left suddenly, for some reason or caprice not specified.

It was at Florence, in May 1827, that Lady Blessington first met Walter Savage Landor. He had known Lord Blessington when the latter was still Viscount Mountjoy, and now, in the spring, and until the end of the autumn, he went every evening from his villa and spent it in their society, soon forming what her biographer calls ‘the strongest attachment that comes within the legitimate limits and bounds of literary friendship.’ In December of this year, Lord Blessington’s only legitimate daughter, Lady Harriet Gardiner, then aged fifteen years and four months, was taken from school in her own country, brought to Italy, and there, within a few weeks of her

arrival, married to Count D'Orsay, a man, whatever his attractions may have been, whom she had never previously seen, and who had never until now set eyes upon her. Madden, who was a medical man, says that when, on the death of his only legitimate son in 1823, Lord Blessington executed a document making D'Orsay his heir on condition of his marrying either of the testator's daughters, he was of unsound mind. But he nowhere hints that Lady Blessington ever had a word to say against the peculiar arrangement.

In 1828 the whole party set out on a leisurely progress homewards. They proposed to stay some time in Paris, and accordingly rented the best house they could find, which happened to be the splendid mansion of Maréchal Ney. Besides the enormously high rent which he paid for this palace, Lord Blessington's expenditure in adding to its decorations and furniture was on a scale more commensurate with the income of a Rothschild than with that of an Irish landlord. In the *Idler in France*, published in 1841, Lady Blessington described its gorgeous furniture and upholstery for the edification of the British public. 'Such carpets!' she exclaims, and well she might:—

— The principal drawing-room has a carpet of dark crimson, on which is a wreath of flowers that looks as if newly culled from the garden, so rich, varied, and bright are their hues. The curtains are of crimson satin, with embossed patterns of gold colour, and the sofas, *bergères*, *fauteuils*, and chairs, richly carved and gilt, are covered with satin to correspond with the curtains. Gilt *consoles*, and *chiffonnières* with white marble tops, are placed wherever they could be disposed, and on the chimney-pieces are fine *pendules*.

— Our present notions of household decoration are widely different from what were in vogue in the early Victorian period, and the mere recital of her ladyship’s dithyrambic account is enough to make William Morris turn in his grave! Another drawing-room, we are told, was decked in ‘blue satin with rich white flowers’; but it was in the decoration of Miladi’s *chambre à coucher* and dressing-room that Lord Blessington and the upholsterer endeavoured to surpass themselves. She was not allowed to enter these rooms until they were quite finished; what she then saw is described as follows:—

— The bed, which is silvered instead of gilt, rests on the backs of two large silver swans, so exquisitely sculptured that every feather is in alto-relievo, and looks nearly as fleecy as those of a living bird. The recess in which it is placed is lined with white fluted silk, bordered with blue embossed lace; and from

the columns that support the frieze of the recess, pale blue silk curtains, lined with white, are hung, which, when drawn, conceal the recess altogether. . . . A silvered sofa has been made to fit the side of the room opposite the fireplace, . . . pale blue carpets, silver lamps, ornaments silvered to correspond. . . . The *salle de bain* is draped with white muslin trimmed with lace, . . . the bath is of white marble inserted in the floor, with which its surface is level. On the ceiling . . . a painting of Flora scattering flowers with one hand, while from the other is suspended an alabaster lamp in the form of a lotus.

She goes into raptures over all this 'perfection of furniture,' which she considers 'chastely beautiful.' It is certainly remarkable for its costliness, and also for the fact that the Parisian upholsterers completed the decoration and furnishing of the whole mansion in three days. Madden grimly remarks on it that Lord Blessington was actively co-operating with other absentee landlords of his order in laying the foundations of the Encumbered Estates Court in Ireland! But he did not live to see the result of his prodigality. In the early part of the following year he suddenly died; and all his honours became extinct. It was then discovered that he had reduced his rentals by about one-third, and that his estate was otherwise much embarrassed. When he came into his property it was worth £30,000 a year; when he married his

second wife it had fallen to £23,000; and when Madden wrote his biography of the Countess in 1855, all that remained was some £600 a year, which was then enjoyed by Charles John, Lord Blessington’s illegitimate son. But this is anticipating matters. For the moment, Lady Blessington’s jointure of £2000 a year was safe; and in the belief that she could very largely augment her income by the efforts of her pen, she came to London in 1831, and established herself in a handsome house in Seamore Place, Mayfair.

By way of a beginning, she tendered her services to Colbourn’s *New Monthly Magazine*, then edited by Thomas Campbell; and S. C. Hall, the sub-editor, was sent to interview her on the matter. None of her suggestions for subjects appeared to him to be very promising; but in course of conversation she related an anecdote or two about Lord Byron, and Hall said, ‘Why not put on paper your stories about the great poet?’ This was the origin of her *Conversations with Lord Byron*, which first appeared serially in the *New Monthly*, and afterwards, in book-form, in 1834. The earliest contemporary notice of her at Seamore Place occurs in the diary of Crabb Robinson, who notes that, on September 28, 1832, he went by Landor’s desire to see Lady Blessington,

and that he found her to be a charming and very remarkable person :—

Lady Blessington is much more handsome than Countess Egloffstein, but their countenance, manners, and particularly the tone of voice, belong to the same class. Her dress rich, and her library most splendid. Her book about Lord Byron (now publishing by driblets in the *New Monthly Magazine*) and her other writings give her in addition the character of a *bel esprit*. Landor, too, says that she was to Lord B. the most devoted wife he ever knew. He says also that she was by far the most beautiful woman he ever saw, and was so deemed at the Court of George IV. She is now, Landor says, about thirty, but I should have thought her older. [She was forty-three.] She is a great talker, but her talk is rather narrative than declamatory, and very pleasant.

In 1833 appeared her first novel, *The Repealers*; and in the summer of that year occurred what was the first of a series of pecuniary misfortunes, a burglary at Seamore Place, when a thousand pounds' worth of plate and jewellery was carried off, and never recovered. She had furnished the place with her accustomed splendour, and proceeded to entertain largely. Haydon's diary for November 27, 1835, says: 'Everybody goes to Lady Blessington's. She has the first news of everything, and everybody seems delighted to tell her.' A month later, he records a good story which he heard her tell :—

She described Lord Abercorn’s conduct at the Priory. She said it was the most singular place on earth. The moment anybody became celebrated they were invited. He had a great delight in seeing handsome women. Everybody handsome he made Lady Abercorn invite; and all the guests shot, hunted, rode, or did what they liked, provided they never spoke to Lord Abercorn except at table. If they met him they were to take no notice. At this time *Thaddeus of Warsaw* was making a noise. ‘Gad,’ said Lord Abercorn, ‘we must have these Porters. Write, my dear Lady Abercorn.’ She wrote. An answer came from Jane Porter that they could not afford the expense of travelling. A cheque was sent. They arrived. Lord Abercorn peeped at them as they came through the hall, and running by the private staircase to Lady Abercorn, exclaimed: ‘Witches, my Lady! I must be off,’ and immediately started post, and remained away till they were gone.

Lady Blessington’s first ‘Book of Beauty’ appeared in 1833, and in December of that year she complacently informed Moore that its sale had beat Miss Landon’s by 2000 copies. In the following year her *Conversations with Lord Byron* were republished in book form; in 1835 she issued *The Two Friends*; and in 1836 her *Flowers of Loveliness*. About this time also appeared the first of the annual ‘Gems of Beauty,’ which she edited for a period of five years.

The best account of Seamore Place and the society

which gathered there is to be found in a volume entitled *Pencillings by the Way*, in which a lively and picturesque, but somewhat indiscreet, American writer, N. P. Willis, gave his countrymen a graphic account of all the notabilities whom he had interviewed during an extended European tour.

In a long library [he says], lined alternately with splendidly bound books and mirrors, and with a deep window of the breadth of the room, opening upon Hyde Park, I found Lady Blessington. The picture to my eye, as the door opened, was a very lovely one; a woman of remarkable beauty, half-buried in a *fauteuil* of yellow satin, reading by a magnificent lamp suspended from the centre of the arched ceiling; sofas, couches, ottomans, and busts, arranged in rather a crowded sumptuousness through the room; enamel tables, covered with expensive and elegant trifles, in every corner; and a delicate white hand relieved on the back of a book, to which the eye was attracted by the blaze of its diamond rings.

Willis thought her by no means unlike her portrait in the 'Book of Beauty,' though he considered she was more like the picture by Sir Thomas Lawrence, painted when she was eighteen. At the time of his visit she was forty-four, but, although he could see she was 'no longer *dans sa première jeunesse*,' he guesses her to be something on the sunny side of thirty, and certainly one of the most lovely and fascinating women he had ever seen. He was

invited to attend her evening receptions during his stay in London, and relates that, on his first visit, ‘Smith, the author of the *Rejected Addresses*, with a cripple’s crutch in his hand, and a pair of large india-rubber shoes on his feet, kindly told him who and what all the other celebrities were. It must have been an unusually small party, for we hear only of Henry Bulwer, who had lately published his book on the state of France, of a German prince, with a star on his breast, who was vainly trying to understand what the others were saying about a recent speech of O’Connell’s, of the Duc de Richelieu, and, of course, the splendid D’Orsay. Towards midnight the exquisite author of *Pelham* was announced, and then ensued a flood of brilliant talk, which lasted until three in the morning. At that hour, says Willis, ‘the “Rejected Addresses” got upon his crutches, and I sallied out with him, thanking Heaven that, though in a strange country, my mother-tongue was the language of its men of genius.’ Later, he was at a dinner-party in the same house and listened to Moore’s sparkling talk through the whole evening, until at last, with great difficulty, the latter was taken to the piano, when, ‘after two or three songs of Lady Blessington’s choice, he rambled over the keys awhile, and then

sang "When First I met Thee" with a pathos that beggars description. When the last word had faltered out, he rose and took Lady Blessington's hand, said good-night, and was gone before a word was uttered.' On another occasion he found young Benjamin Disraeli sitting in the window, with the last rays of the daylight reflected from the gorgeous gold flowers of a splendidly embroidered waistcoat, patent leather pumps, a white stick with a black cord and tassel, a quantity of gold chains about his neck and pockets, and a thick mass of jet-black ringlets falling over his left cheek almost to his collarless stock. 'He talked,' says Willis, 'like a racehorse approaching the winning-post, every muscle in action, and the utmost energy of expression flung out in every burst.'

Seamore Place must have been a quite sufficiently expensive house to keep up. But Lady Blessington conceived that she had a mission in life which required a much more extensive establishment for its proper development. She believed that it was her mission to bring together intellectual men of the most varying and diverse opinions—statesmen, lawyers, authors, artists, journalists—in order to promote among them, by means of personal acquaintance, some measure of goodwill, charity, and

toleration. And Count D’Orsay, ably seconding her in this by no means despicable ambition, desired to extend its scope on international lines, with the idea that many of the causes of national prejudices, jealousies, and antipathies might be removed by social intercourse. With this object in view she removed to Gore House, Kensington, which was decorated and furnished with great magnificence in the early part of 1836.

Gore House stood where now stands the gigantic Albert Hall. It was originally tenanted by a Government contractor, who is said to have been so stingy that he would not expend a single penny in keeping its garden in order. Its second tenant was the philanthropist William Wilberforce, who delighted to sit under the shade of the old trees in the garden and meditate on the beauties of nature, ‘as if I were two hundred miles from the great city,’ and who tells us that he walked to it from Hyde Park Corner, ‘repeating the 119th Psalm in great comfort.’ Then came Lady Blessington and Count D’Orsay, and for thirteen years the house was the scene of some of the most brilliant entertainments in London. And after their departure, Monsieur Soyer, of culinary fame, after getting young George Augustus Sala to cover the walls with original

paintings in a bizarre and rather grotesque style of magnificence, opened the house as a restaurant 'for all Nations,' during the Great Exhibition of 1851. Lady Blessington spoke of it as her country-house, 'being a mile from town'; and in those days this was scarcely a misnomer, for the house was surrounded by about three acres of grounds, 'full of lilacs, laburnums, nightingales, and swallows,' and containing some fine old walnut and mulberry trees. Concerning Lady Blessington as hostess, and the society which she gathered about her, there is much diversity of opinion. Charles Greville seems to have been in the habit of dining there pretty frequently, although neither the lady nor the majority of her guests seem to have been altogether to his taste. He notes in his diary on February 17, 1837, that he dined at Gore House to meet Lords Durham and Brougham :—

There was that sort of strange *omnium gatherum* party which is to be met with nowhere else, and which for that reason alone is curious. We had Prince Louis Napoleon and his A.D.C. He is a short, thickish, vulgar-looking man, without the slightest resemblance to his imperial uncle, or any intelligence in his countenance. Then we had the ex-Governor of Canada, Captain Marriott, the Count Alfred de Vigny (author of *Cinq Mars*, etc.), Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer, and a proper sprinkling of ordinary persons to mix up with these celebrities.

On another occasion he remarks on the drollery of seeing Lord Lyndhurst, the most execrated of the Tories, hand-and-glove and cracking his jokes with two prominent Radicals. The house, he says, is furnished with a luxury and splendour not to be surpassed; the dinners are frequent and good; D’Orsay does the honours with a frankness and cordiality which are very successful; and there is no end to the men of consequence and distinction in the world who go there occasionally. But all this, he thinks, does not make Society in the real meaning of the term, and he will allow the house no merit but that of being singular. He finds a want of conversation, of easy, quiet interchange of ideas and opinions, and the reason is, in his opinion, that ‘the woman herself, who must give the tone to her own society, is ignorant, vulgar, and commonplace.’ Her literary success is a puzzle to him, for, he says, he never met a single person who had read any of her trashy books, and nothing could be more dull and uninteresting than her conversation. On the other hand, Henry Reeve, who, on a point of literary culture and taste, at any rate, is a more competent authority than the mordant diarist, says that Lady Blessington had a good deal more talent and reading than the other gave her credit for, that she was well

read in the best English authors, and even in translations of the classics. The talent to which she owed her success in society, he says, was an incomparable tact and skill in drawing out the best qualities of her guests. Surely that was no mean gift? What Mr. Greville terms her vulgarity might, in his opinion, be better described as Irish cordiality and *bonhomie*. Madden, whose acquaintance with Lady Blessington extended over a long period of years, says that she seldom spoke at length, and consequently never bored her guests; that she was always more ready to draw them out than to shine herself, and that such was her skill in this art that, like Mirabeau's ideal lady, she could draw wit out of a fool. At the same time, he says, she could be admirably bright, lively, and humorous, and the witchery of her beautiful voice, her ringing laugh, and frequent outbursts of exuberant mirthfulness, contributed not a little to her powers of fascination. Walter Savage Landor used to say that he remembered no pleasanter time of his life in Italy than the summer evenings passed with the Blessingtons in the Casa Pelosi, on its terrace overlooking the Arno. And in Forster's *Life* of him we are told that Gore House was the place in which Landor's happiest London life was passed, for it was that in

which he felt the least constraint, and knew he should always find the warmest welcome. Mr. Forster says :—

Its attraction to those who had familiar admission there was even less the accomplishments and grace of its mistress than her true-heartedness and constancy in friendship, and no one had reason to know this better than Landor. Again and again he dwells on it in letters to his sister. From the splendour of its mansion, the taste and order of its interior, the extent and beauty of its pleasure-grounds, its company of men the most distinguished, and of opinions the most various and opposed—he comes always back to its central charm, the unaffectedness and warmth of heart that presided over all, and yielded to every one who entered it his greatest enjoyment.

There was, however, one regrettable peculiarity of the society at Gore House. Although Lady Blessington appears to have by no means wanted for cordial women friends, ladies were never present at her dinner-table, or her evening receptions, on account of the scandal created by her living in the same house with Count D’Orsay, and the rumours which had got abroad concerning her previous conduct. In S. C. Hall’s *Memories of a Long Life* there is a fine specimen of the confused and illogical, not to say hypocritical, way such matters are treated in this ultra-moral country. Hall considers that Count

D'Orsay was so little guided by principle that he could not expect general credit for the purity of his relations with Lady Blessington; 'Yet,' says he, 'I think he might honestly have claimed it.' 'But,' continues this virtuous gentleman, 'there was no doubting the fact' (for which, however, he does not produce a tittle of evidence), 'that she had been the mistress, before she became the wife, of the Earl of Blessington.' Wherefore—and this is the extraordinary way in which British respectability accommodates itself to its environment—'Mrs. Hall never accompanied me to her evenings, *though she was a frequent day caller!*' Apart from the interpretation of them, moreover, the facts of the case as regards Lady Blessington's relations with D'Orsay have not been always correctly stated. The writer of the articles 'Countess of Blessington' and 'Count D'Orsay' in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, for instance, in the one article states the case with either unconscious or else carefully calculated ambiguity (to say nothing of making two further misstatements in the same sentence), while in the other article he contradicts what he says in the first. In the Lady Blessington article we are told that:—

Count D'Orsay meanwhile, who but a few months after

his marriage had been separated from his young wife, had for the last dozen years [*i.e.* previous to 1848] been *living at Gore House with the Countess of Blessington*.

But in the D’Orsay article the same writer says:—

They lived scrupulously apart, though within easy distance. While the Countess had her home in Gore House, the Count occupied a villa next door, No. 4 Kensington Gore.

Now Count D’Orsay was *not* separated from his wife a few months after their marriage. They were married in 1827, and lived together, with Lord and Lady Blessington, until the Earl’s death in 1829. And when Madden returned to England, and visited Lady Blessington at Seamore Place in March 1832, he says most distinctly that ‘the Count and Countess D’Orsay were then residing with her.’ The precise date of the separation is, of course, a matter of no particular moment, but it was probably not long before the date, in 1838, when the Count executed an agreement relinquishing all his interest in the Blessington estates, in consideration of a sum of money paid down to himself, and the application of the bulk of it to the benefit of his creditors. It is quite true that for a short time D’Orsay lived in a villa adjoining Gore House; but he afterwards domiciled himself with Lady Blessington—though not quite a dozen years before 1848.

Lady Blessington writes to her friend the Countess Guiccioli, from Gore House, on August 15, 1839, saying :—

Your friend Alfred [*i.e.* D'Orsay] charges me with his kindest regards to you. He is now an inmate at Gore House, having sold his own residence; and this is not only a great protection, but a great addition to my comfort.

At this date Lady Blessington's age was fifty, and Count D'Orsay's thirty-eight. If not precisely his mother-in-law, she was the widow of his father-in-law, and, according to the evidence at our disposal, had stood towards him *in loco parentis* for the past sixteen years. Miss Power, Lady Blessington's sister, says that Lord Blessington loved D'Orsay with a parental affection; that he had promised D'Orsay's mother never to abandon him; that with her dying breath that mother had extracted a similar promise from Lady Blessington; and that in the young Count her sister had found the son that Nature had withheld from her, and had in consequence bestowed on him that tenderness with which her heart overflowed. And we know that when the hand of death was upon him, D'Orsay said to Madden respecting Lady Blessington, the tears all the while pouring down his face, 'She was to me a mother! a dear, dear

mother! a true loving mother to me!’ That this was, in fact, the kind of relationship between them seems to be beyond any reasonable doubt; but, of course, people will continue to draw their own conclusions according to their several ways of thinking.

For ten years, from 1839 to 1849, D’Orsay did the honours of Gore House; and during the whole time of her residence there, Lady Blessington’s literary activity was indefatigable. Besides the various ‘Annuals,’ the editing of which must have been no sinecure, she produced *The Confessions of an Elderly Gentleman* in 1836; *The Victims of Society*, in 1837; *The Confessions of an Elderly Lady*, in 1838; *The Governess, Desultory Thoughts and Reflections*, and *The Idler in Italy*, in 1839; *The Belle of a Season*, a story in verse, in 1840; *The Idler in France*, in 1841, *The Lottery of Life and other Tales*, in 1842; *Strathern; or, Life at Home and Abroad*, which first ran as a serial in the *Sunday Times*, in 1843; *Memoirs of a Femme de Chambre*, in 1846; *Marmaduke Herbert; or, The Fatal Error*, in 1847; and, after her death, a story which she had completed, entitled *Country Quarters*, was published in 1850. For six months in 1846 she had also been employed by the *Daily News*, at a salary of £500

a year, to supply that recently established newspaper with 'exclusive intelligence.' As far back as 1835, it may be remembered, Haydon noted in his diary that Lady Blessington always had the first news of everything; and it is not much to be wondered at if, like other purveyors of early and exclusive intelligence, she occasionally heard of things which never happened at all. The hoax about Lord Brougham's death, which elicited such a host of criticisms and panegyrics on his life and character in all the papers in 1839, was first made public at Gore House, and thence spread abroad over the kingdom, though it cannot be said to have been originated by Lady Blessington. A letter, purporting to be from Mr. Shafto (but without a doubt written by the volatile peer himself), setting forth the particulars of Lord Brougham's death by a carriage accident, was received by Mr. Alfred Montgomery. Mr. Henry Reeve says:—

Mr. Montgomery brought the letter to Lady Blessington's—at Gore House, where I happened to be, and I confess we were all taken in by the hoax. Montgomery went off in a post-chaise to break the news to Lord Wellesley at Fernhill; and meeting Lord Alfred Paget in Windsor Park, he sent the news to the castle. The trick was kept up for twenty-four hours, but the next day I received a note from Brougham himself, full of his usual spirits and vitality.

When Lady Blessington removed to Gore House she seems to have imagined that her jointure of £2000 a year, together with the profits of her literary work, would be amply sufficient to meet all conceivable liabilities. What these profits amounted to cannot be ascertained with certainty. The writer of her life in the *Dictionary of National Biography* quotes Jerdan as his authority for the statement that ‘for nearly twenty years’ she earned an income of between two and three thousand a year. Jerdan, however, says nothing about twenty or any other period of years; and his estimate of something midway between two or three thousand *per annum* is based on the questionable assumption that her well-arranged parties enabled her to make favourable terms with publishers, and also to obtain the bulk of the contents of her ‘*Annals*’ from private friends without payment. Her sister’s estimate is probably much nearer the mark. ‘I believe,’ says Miss Power, ‘that for some years she made on an average somewhat about £1000 a year,’ although some years produced a good deal above that sum. It may go without the saying that an income of anything like this amount was far from sufficient to maintain the flunkies, the carriages and horses which were the talk of London, the dinners, the

entertainments, and other extravagances of Gore House. It must be remembered also that Lady Blessington had some half-dozen members of her family entirely dependent on her. In 1845 the potato blight in Ireland seriously reduced the value of her jointure. In 1848 she lost £700 by the failure of Charles Heath, the engraver. Then there were Count D'Orsay's difficulties to be perpetually reckoned with. Soon after his arrival in London, he was arrested for a debt of £300 to his Paris bootmaker; and he had been accumulating fresh debts ever since. We are told that Lady Blessington was exact, and even economical, in household matters; regularly examining accounts and keeping a constant eye on orders to tradesmen. But paltry economies of this kind could make little difference when her scale of expenditure was fixed at probably double the amount of her income. Madden says that the light-hearted happiness of the Italian period was conspicuous by its absence from the society of Gore House. And we find the Countess indulging in unwontedly gloomy 'reflections,' such as: 'Many minds that have withstood the most severe trials have been broken down by a succession of ignoble cares,' or 'Friends are thermometers by which we may judge the temperature of our fortunes.' From

a letter of 1848 we learn that her diamonds were in pawn; and early in 1849 there were unmistakable indications that the inevitable crash was imminent. D’Orsay’s liabilities were enormous. From a schedule drawn up by himself it appears that they amounted to £107,000 due to ordinary creditors, and about £13,000 more to private friends. Tradesmen had been only too pleased to give him credit for the sake of the immense advertisement which the report of his patronage gave them; but of course they were not content to wait for ever, and for some time he had been in such danger of arrest, that he could not venture outside the house and grounds except on Sundays. For two years Lady Blessington had lived in constant apprehension of executions; and precautions had been carefully observed at the outer gate to prevent the entrance of any suspicious-looking person. At last, however, an ingenious sheriff’s officer effected an entrance in a disguise, ‘the ludicrousness of which,’ says Madden with tantalising reticence, ‘had some of the characteristics of farce.’ He represented a house dealing in silk, lace, Indian shawls, and jewellery, to whom £4000 were owing; and, of course, a cloud of other claimants—bill-discounters, money-lenders, jewellers, tax-collectors, and others—followed in his wake.

As soon as the Countess heard of the entrance of the sheriff's officer, she sent up to D'Orsay's room to tell him he must immediately leave England; and on the following morning, with his valet and a single portmanteau, he set off for Paris. Lady Blessington and the two Miss Powers left for the same destination a fortnight afterwards.

Gore House was given over to the auctioneers. Those who are curious about such coincidences will be interested to note that Lady Blessington began her literary career, in 1822, with a little book containing a fictitious sketch of the ruin of a large house in one of the London squares, and the sale by auction of all its magnificent furniture and costly ornaments. That career ended in 1849 with an auction at Gore House, and the sale of what the auctioneer's catalogue described as :—

Costly and elegant effects, comprising all the magnificent furniture, rare porcelain, sculpture in marble, bronzes, and an assemblage of objects of art and decoration, a casket of valuable jewellery and bijouterie, services of rich chased silver-gilt plate, a superbly fitted silver dressing-case; a collection of ancient and modern pictures, including many portraits of distinguished persons, valuable original drawings, and fine engravings, framed and in the portfolio; the extensive and interesting library of books, comprising upwards of five thousand volumes; expensive table services of china and rich cut

glass, and an infinity of valuable and useful effects; the property of the Right Hon. the Countess of Blessington, retiring to the Continent.

Lady Blessington's French valet wrote to tell her that they were selling catalogues all day long, and that during the five days the things were on view more than twenty thousand persons went over the place. He adds: ‘M. Thackeray est venu aussi, et avait les larmes aux yeux en partant. C'est peut-être la seule personne que j'ai vue réellement affectée en votre départ.’ Prices at the sale ruled low. Landseer's spaniel picture fetched only £150, 10s., and his sketch of Miss Power £57, 10s. Sir Thomas Lawrence's portrait of Lady Blessington brought £336; and D'Orsay's of the Duke of Wellington, £189. The two latter were bought for the Marquis of Hertford, and may now be seen in the Wallace Collection at Hertford House. The net amount realised by the sale fell short of £12,000. Lady Blessington did not long survive the breaking up of her home. On June 4, in the same year she died suddenly of an apoplectic attack, due to an enlarged heart, in the sixtieth year of her age. She was buried at Chambourey, near Saint-Germains, in an odd mausoleum, designed by D'Orsay, in which, three years and two months later, he was buried also.

Whether Lady Blessington's books were altogether such trash as Greville would have us believe, is a matter on which there may be some difference of opinion; but it must be admitted that, with the solitary exception of the *Conversations with Lord Byron*, they have had their day, and completely ceased to be. Her character was far from flawless; but there is no doubt that some of the aspersions cast upon her were entirely undeserved. And, on the whole, but little exception need be taken to the terms of the epitaph which Barry Cornwall wrote for her tomb: 'In her lifetime she was loved and admired for her many graceful writings, her gentle manners, her kind and generous heart. Men famous for art and science, in distant lands, sought her friendship; and the historians and scholars, the poets, and wits, and painters of her own country found an unfailing welcome in her ever-hospitable home. She gave cheerfully to all who were in need, help, and sympathy, and useful counsel; and she died lamented by many friends.'





*M<sup>rs</sup> Lennox.*  
*From an Engraving by Bartolozzi.*  
*Of the Picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds.*

## ‘THE FEMALE QUIXOTE’

BOSWELL relates that on one Saturday evening in 1784, Johnson, who was ‘in fine spirits,’ informed the company at the Essex-Head-Club that he had on the previous day dined at Mrs. Garrick’s in company with Mrs. Carter, Miss Hannah More, and Miss Fanny Burney, and that he went on to say: ‘Three such women are not to be found: I know not where I could find a fourth—except Mrs. Lennox, who is superior to them all.’ The collocation of names is somewhat puzzling. Fanny Burney we know, for she is, by common consent, among the immortals. Hannah More we know, for not only did some of her works circulate by the million during her lifetime, but they maintained a considerable degree of popularity down to our own day. Even Mrs. Carter we know, for she was called ‘the Madame Dacier of England,’ and her excellent translation of Epictetus even now holds the field. But who was Mrs. Lennox? It would probably be safe enough to wager that not one modern reader in ten thousand could so much as name the title of

a single work by this lady, who was confidently pronounced by Johnson to be 'superior to them all.' Yet it must be admitted that the old lexicographer was pre-eminently qualified to pronounce an opinion on such a matter; for at the 'blue-stocking' assemblies of Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Vesey, Mrs. Ord, and elsewhere, he had had ample opportunity for converse with all who were in any way remarkable for talent among the women of his time. All we can gather from the literary text-books, however, is that Mrs. Lennox's literary activity covered the fifty-seven years between 1747 and 1804, and that, in addition to a number of translations from the French, her original work included a volume of poems, two comedies (acted at Covent Garden and Drury Lane), a critical work on Shakespeare, and about half-a-dozen novels, of varying degrees of merit, but none of them worthy of being rescued from the oblivion into which they have sunk. Nevertheless, a little further investigation will show that Johnson was not, after all, so egregiously mistaken in the high estimate which he had formed of Mrs. Lennox's powers. Her poetry, whether in the form of a 'Pastoral Elegy,' or a 'Hymn to Venus,' or what she imagined to be an 'ode,' in imitation of Sappho, or a copy of 'Verses wrote

extempore on a Gentleman’s playing on the Flute,’ may at once be put aside as totally unreadable. Her critical work on Shakespeare, in which she traced his plots to their sources, and indulged in a good deal of animadversion on his shortcomings as a dramatic artist, must be admitted to be not only presumptuous but silly. But one of her comedies, *The Sisters*, though perhaps a trifle too gushing for the modern playgoer’s taste, is certainly a bright, lively, interesting, and well-constructed play; and one of her novels, *The Female Quixote, or The Adventures of Arabella*, is unquestionably a work of genius, abounding in delicate satire and pure humour; and there were few writers among Johnson’s acquaintance, male or female, who would not have been proud to put their names to such a book.

The accounts which have come down to us of Mrs. Lennox herself are unfortunately of a very meagre character. She was the daughter of Colonel James Ramsay, Lieut.-Governor of New York; and in 1735, at the age of fifteen, was sent to England to be adopted by a wealthy aunt. Soon after her arrival, however, the aunt became insane, and shortly afterwards died, leaving her *protégée* totally unprovided for. Almost at the same time Colonel Ramsay

died in New York, leaving his widow there in the same destitute condition. How the young lady managed to support herself in these trying circumstances is not known; but in 1748 we get a glimpse of her in one of Horace Walpole's letters, wherein that dilettante gentleman says he has just come from the play at Richmond, where he had found the Duchess of Argyll and all her court, and had seen, amongst other things, 'a Miss Charlotte Ramsay, a poetess and deplorable actress.' It is to be presumed that the acting was not more successful as a means of livelihood than the publication of *Poems on Several Occasions, Written by a Young Lady*, which had appeared in the previous year. At any rate, we hear of no repetition of either; and in this same year, 1748, Miss Ramsay was married to a Mr. Lennox, an obscure person of whom nothing is known. Soon after this she appears to have become acquainted with Johnson, who, many years afterwards, in one of his communicative moods at Streatham, related how she, like many another when commencing author, had written to him for advice and assistance. Among other things, she desired to make the acquaintance of Richardson. 'Poor Charlotte,' said Johnson; 'when we came to the house, she desired me to

leave her, "for," said she, "I am under great restraint in your presence; but if you leave me alone with Richardson I'll give you a very good account of him": however, I fear poor Charlotte was disappointed, for she gave me no account at all.' But if Richardson was chary of giving encouragement to a budding novelist, Johnson was not; and one of the few good stories, not in Boswell, which have been preserved for us by the pompous Sir John Hawkins, describes the Doctor's kindly, but highly unconventional, method of celebrating the publication of a lady's first novel.

Mrs. Lennox [says Hawkins], a lady now well known in the literary world, had written a novel entitled *The Life of Harriot Stuart*, which in the spring of 1751 was ready for publication. One evening at the Club, Johnson proposed to us the celebrating the birth of Mrs. Lennox's first literary child, as he called her book, by a whole night spent in festivity. Upon his mentioning it to me, I told him I had never sat up a whole night in my life; but he continuing to press me, and saying that I should find great delight in it, I, as did all the rest of the company, consented. The place appointed was the Devil tavern, and there, about the hour of eight, Mrs. Lennox and her husband, and a lady of her acquaintance, now living, as also the Club and friends to the number of near twenty, assembled. Our supper was elegant, and Johnson had directed that a magnificent hot apple-pie should make a part of it, and this he would have stuck with

bay leaves, because, forsooth, Mrs. Lennox was an authoress, and had written verses; and further, he had prepared for her a crown of laurel, with which, but not till he had invoked the muses by some ceremonies of his own invention, he encircled her brows. The night passed, as must be imagined, in pleasant conversation and harmless mirth, intermingled at different periods with the refreshments of coffee and tea. About five, Johnson's face shone with meridian splendour, though his drink had been only lemonade; but the far greater part of us had [not?] deserted the colours of Bacchus, and were with difficulty persuaded to partake of a second refreshment of coffee, which was scarcely ended when the day began to dawn. This phenomenon put us in mind of our reckonings; but the waiters were all so overcome with sleep that it was two hours before we could get a bill.

The strait-laced, and, as Johnson termed him, 'unclubable,' Hawkins adds that when he went out of the tavern door at eight o'clock he was overcome with shame, not, he takes care to state, 'by reflection on any evil that had passed in the course of the night's entertainment,' but because of its suspicious resemblance to 'a debauch.' Neither 'Harriot Stuart,' nor any of Mrs. Lennox's subsequent literary children, however, brought her very much either of fame or of money; and when, twenty-four years later, Johnson sat down to write the proposals for a collected edition of her works (which, notwithstanding the patronage of the Queen, never got

beyond the proposal stage), he urged that though most of the pieces had been read with approbation when originally published, the author’s labours had been chiefly gainful to others, and of very little pecuniary advantage to herself. And her plays met with even less success than her novels—*The Sisters*, in particular, being hooted down on its first night at Covent Garden by a noisy crew who professed, in so doing, to be vindicating Shakespeare against the strictures she had passed upon him in the critical work already alluded to. Boswell relates an amusing conversation which took place when Goldsmith (who had written a sparkling epilogue for *The Sisters*), happened to mention that some person, unnamed, had asked him to go and hiss the play.

JOHNSON. And did you not tell him he was a rascal?

GOLDSMITH. No, sir, I did not. Perhaps he might not have meant what he said.

JOHNSON. Nay, sir, if he lied, it is a different thing.

Whereupon, Colman, taking care Johnson did not overhear, slyly observed that the proper expression should have been—‘Sir, if you don’t lie, you are a rascal!’ That Mrs. Lennox’s play was not damned on its merits is sufficiently evident, as John Forster pointed out, from the fact that when Burgoyne’s *Heiress* appeared—the three principal characters of

which were unblushingly stolen from this very play—it was hailed, by the same critics who had abused *The Sisters*, as 'the finest comedy in the English language.' And this was only one of a series of disappointments, which caused the author of *The Sisters* to be generally spoken of as 'the unfortunate Mrs. Lennox.' She survived her old friend and champion nearly twenty years; but during the whole of that time she produced only two books, and those of very inferior calibre; and all that we know of her latter days is that they were clouded by sickness and poverty; that in the last year of her life she received a pension from the Royal Literary Fund; and that when she died, in 1804, the Right Hon. George Rose, who had previously befriended her, paid the expenses of her funeral.

*The Female Quixote*, which is far and away above the level of Mrs. Lennox's other productions, appeared in 1752. Like its famous prototype, it is a satire on the extravagance of some of the old romances. But the romances with which Mrs. Lennox deals are not to be confounded with the romances of chivalry which filled the library of the Knight of La Mancha; though, to adopt M. Demoget's phrase, they may be considered as 'an unlucky phoenix,' which arose from the bonfire of

Don Quixote's books, 'for the ennui of the seventeenth century.' The principal writers of these ponderous French romances (which some have termed 'heroical,' and others 'long-winded') were Gautier de la Calprenède and the two Scuderis. To the former writer we owe the possibly 'heroical,' but certainly 'long-winded,' works entitled *Cleopatra* and *Cassandra*, and to the latter writer two similar works entitled *Clélie*, and *Artamenes, or The Grand Cyrus*—to say nothing of several others with which our present narrative has no concern. All these romances purported to be historical; and Dunlop, in his *History of Fiction*, seems disposed to concede them at least an historical basis, on the ground that, although the incidents are almost entirely imaginative, yet they are such as might possibly have occurred without having been recorded in any of the authentic histories which have come down to us. Cæsario, instead of being murdered, *might* have escaped into Ethiopia; Pompey *might* have had a posthumous son, who *might* have served in the army of an Asiatic monarch—and so forth. But seeing that Madame Scuderi sometimes attempted the portraiture of her contemporaries under the thin disguise of Greek and Roman names, and that both she and Calprenède invariably attributed to the persons of ancient history

who figure in their pages the manners and sentiments of the seventeenth century, the historical basis amounts to little more than might be conceded to Mr. E. T. Reid, when he depicts the skin-clad troglodytes of the stone-age engaged in a game of ping-pong, or cricket, or golf. Moreover, there is little variety or discrimination of character in any of these books. Most of the heroines are illustrious princesses, who are paragons of beauty, and learning, and wit. All of them have an innumerable succession of devoted lovers; and all of them calmly command their lovers to perform more than the labours of Hercules before they may hope to be rewarded with so much as a smile. The heroes are all incomparable princes, who all profess the same kind of fantastic adoration, and in spite of the utmost discouragement remain eternally enamoured of the disdainful princesses; all of them perform a similar series of impossible exploits; and all of them bore the reader by relating at interminable length some one or more of their incredible adventures whenever an opportunity can be found. *Cleopatra* occupies twelve volumes octavo; *Clélie* is in ten volumes of 800 pages each; and the *Grand Cyrus* is more ponderous still.

It is sometimes said that Boileau completely

extinguished the ‘heroical’ school and all its works. Yet we find them exerting an extraordinary fascination down, at any rate, to the middle of the eighteenth century. Rousseau tells us in his *Confessions* that when he was a boy he and his father sat up many a night poring over the adventures of Oroondates in *Cassandra*, until the chirping of swallows outside their window announced the break of day. Mrs. Chapone, author of those highly serious *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* which gave such pleasure to George III. and Queen Charlotte, relates that in her younger days she not only succumbed to the enticing pleasure of reading these ponderous works, but devoted her budding talent to writing imitations of them, until her judicious mother instituted so stringent a course of domestic training that all such nonsense was finally driven out of her head. And readers of Boswell’s *Life of Johnson* will hardly need to be reminded of the Doctor’s ride to Derby on his marriage morn, when, as he declared, in consequence of having read these old romances, his bride had ‘got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog,’ and would probably have carried her caprices to greater lengths than she did, had not the burly bridegroom ‘began as he meant to end,’ and promptly applied an

effectual extinguisher. In *The Female Quixote, or The Adventures of Arabella*, Mrs. Lennox presents us with a heroine of high rank, great beauty, varied accomplishments, and amiable temper, who gets herself into innumerable difficulties through the influence of a similar course of reading.

Arabella was the only child of a Marquis; and her mother had died in giving her birth. Her father, driven from power and banished from Court by the machinations of his enemies, had retired to a castle he possessed 'in a very remote part of the kingdom'; and there, cut off from all intercourse with society, he devoted himself to the education of his infant daughter. She proved an apt scholar; and when her father had made her 'a perfect mistress of the French and Italian languages,' and of the various other accomplishments held necessary for a lady of her rank and time, he turned her loose into his library to browse at her own sweet will. It was certainly natural enough that she should at once plunge into the 'heroical' romances which had been the favourite reading of her deceased mother; and it is by no means improbable that a young girl so circumstanced, and having no knowledge of the world to test them by, should not only take these fictions for real history, but adopt the high-flown sentiments

and preposterous actions of the heroes and heroines as her guide in the conduct of life. At the age of seventeen, being perfectly well aware that she was beautiful as well as accomplished and of high rank, she began to think it was quite time that the reputation of her charms should bring a crowd of adorers to solicit from her father the honour of her hand. And, although no legitimate aspirant had yet appeared, she lived in so constant an expectation of being involved in thrilling adventures of the kind that were always happening to the heroines of her romances, that at length she began to misinterpret every trivial incident of her life in conformity with this dominant idea. When, for instance, an assistant gardener, who happens to be tolerably good-looking and genteel, appears on the scene, she takes the young fellow for ‘a person of sublime quality,’ who has so disguised himself in order to be always near herself—the divine object of his silent adoration; and it is impossible to undeceive her even when her supposed prince in disguise is detected stealing carp from the fish-pond. At the same time, when a real lover does make his appearance, she is by no means ready to afford him the slightest encouragement; and when her father hints that he would like her to marry a cousin, named Glanville, who comes on

a visit to the castle, she is shocked at the abrupt indelicacy of such an announcement. For, although she had made up her mind to marry at some time or other, as all her favourite heroines were ultimately married, yet she thought such an event should be brought about, in her case as in theirs, with an infinite deal of trouble; and that only after passing through a great number of distresses and disappointments, should her lover, like the heroes in the books, purchase her with his sword from a crowd of rivals; and be rewarded with her hand and heart only after many years of distinguished service and devoted fidelity. Mr. Glanville offends her somewhat at their first meeting by saluting her in the conventional mode instead of humbly kissing her hand; but he is so handsome, and intelligent, and good tempered, that she cannot help being rather pleased with him, and even goes so far as to own to her maid and confidante that she does not hate him. But when, before many weeks have elapsed, Glanville professes his love, and asks her to be his wife, she is so enraged by this violation of all the romantic laws, which prescribe whole years of silent and suffering devotion before a lover may dare to declare his flame, that she peremptorily banishes him from her presence for ever. Her father learns what has happened, and insists upon

Glanville's recall. The puzzled lover naturally takes an early opportunity to ask in what way he can have been so unfortunate as to unintentionally disoblige her ladyship; and he is not much enlightened when she explains that he had had the unpardonable boldness to talk to her of love, when he must be aware that persons of her sex and quality are not permitted to listen to such discourses. He wonders that she should be angry with any one for loving her; and she explains that what causes her anger is his presumption in *telling her* that he loves her. Glanville argues that if there be nothing criminal in the passion itself, there can certainly be no crime in declaring it. His arguments are specious, she says, but he will at least admit that the authority of custom is on her side. Of course, Glanville claims all the authority of custom for his side, and assures her that all the ladies of whom he has ever heard are so far from being displeased at the addresses of their lovers, that their chief care is to gain them.

'I do not know,' answered Arabella, 'what sort of ladies they are who allow such unbecoming liberties, but I am certain that Statira, Perisatis, Clelia, Mandane, and all the illustrious heroines of antiquity, whom it is a glory to resemble, would never admit of such discourses.'

'For Heaven's sake, cousin,' interrupted Glanville, en-

deavouring to stifle a laugh, 'do not suffer yourself to be governed by such antiquated maxims. The world is quite different to what it was in those days. . . .'

'I am sure,' replied Arabella, 'the world is not more virtuous now than it was in those days, and there is good reason to believe it is not much wiser; and I do not see why the manners of this age are to be preferred to those of former ones unless they are wiser and better: however, I cannot be persuaded things are as you say, but that when I am a little better acquainted with the world I shall find as many persons who resemble Oroondates, Artaxerxes, and the illustrious lover of Clelia, as those who are like Teribases, Artaxes, and the presuming Glanville.'

'By the epithets you give me, madam,' said Glanville, 'I find you have placed me in very bad company; but pray, madam, if the illustrious lover of Clelia had never discovered his passion, how would the world have come to the knowledge of it?'

'He did not discover his passion, sir,' resumed Arabella, 'till by the services he did the noble Clelius and his incomparable daughter he could plead some title to their esteem: he several times preserved the life of that renowned Roman; he delivered the beautiful Clelia when she was a captive, and, in fine, conferred so many obligations upon them and all their friends that he might well expect to be pardoned by the divine Clelia for daring to love her. Nevertheless, she used him very harshly when he first declared his passion, and banished him from her presence; and it was a long time before she could prevail upon herself to compassionate his sufferings.'

Glanville perceives that to woo and win a young

lady of this romantic frame of mind will prove a task of no ordinary difficulty; and, having heard Oroondates several times referred to as an example to be followed, he incautiously expresses a wish to become better acquainted with the actions of this incomparable lover. Arabella, after some expression of wonder how a young gentleman can possibly have spent his time or directed his studies without becoming familiar with these wonderful works 'from which all useful knowledge may be drawn,' at once orders one of her women to fetch *Cleopatra*, *Cassandra*, *Clelia*, and *The Grand Cyrus* from her library. But when the maid returns, staggering under her load of ponderous tomes, he inwardly curses his precipitancy. The mere pretence which he makes of studying these voluminous works soon gets him into further disgrace with his mistress, for in their first conversation on the subject he mistakes Oroondates and Orontes for two persons, whereas if he had read but a single page of a long episode in *Cassandra* to which she had drawn his special attention, he could not have failed to know that Orontes was a name assumed by Oroondates in order to conceal his real name and station. However, being a shrewd fellow, and nothing daunted by a preliminary failure or two, he determines not to

hurry matters; and in one way or another he does somehow succeed in making fair progress in his mistress's good opinion, though, of course, he now and again causes her woeful disappointment by not coming up to her conception of the heroic standard. On one occasion she runs away from the castle in consequence of an entirely groundless fear that an unknown, and indeed non-existent, lover has come to ravish her away; and, after some highly ludicrous adventures, is found and brought home again by Glanville. Then, in the retirement of her room, she gathers from her maid, Lucy (a simple-minded country wench, who is amusing enough, though not to be compared with Sancho Panza), the particulars of the commotion caused by her inexplicable absence. She is especially anxious to know how Glanville comported himself on the occasion. Lucy declares that she believes Mr. Glanville loves her ladyship 'as much as he does his own sister'; whereupon Arabella, with a blush, forbids her to talk about such a thing as a lover's passion. But the laws of Romance admit of fine distinctions; and she goes on to tell the girl:—

'Yet, I permit you to tell me the violence of his transports when I was missing; the threats he uttered against my ravishers; the complaints he made against fortune; the

vows he offered for my preservation; and, in fine, whatever extravagances the excess of his sorrow forced him to commit.'

'I assure you, madam,' said Lucy, 'I did not hear him say any of all this.'

'What!' interrupted Arabella, 'and didst thou not observe the tears trickle from his eyes, which, haply, he strove to conceal? Did he not strike his bosom in the vehemence of his grief, and cast his accusing and despairing eyes to heaven, which had permitted such a misfortune to befall me?'

'Indeed, madam, I did not,' resumed Lucy; 'but he seemed to be very sorry, and said he would go and look for your ladyship.'

But this sounds so very tame that Arabella considers Glanville altogether unworthy of her favourable thoughts, and commands Lucy to speak of him no more.

The sudden death of Arabella's father completely alters the aspect of affairs, and introduces a number of fresh characters on the scene. Glanville's father, Sir Charles, who now becomes Arabella's guardian, his sister, Charlotte, a typical eighteenth-century coquette, and a neighbouring baronet, who endeavours to capture Arabella's hand and fortune by affecting the style and sentiments of her favourite heroes, all become involved in complications and misunderstandings of a highly diverting character.

After the period of mourning is over, Arabella sets out, in company with her uncle and cousins, to see the world, for the first time, at London and at Bath. Her friends anticipate that contact with the actual facts of life will speedily obliterate all her fantastic notions; but, of course, she sees everything at first through the distorting spectacles of 'heroical' romance. A neat country-girl riding behind a man on horseback to market is at once imagined to be some lady or princess in disguise, who is being forced away by a hateful lover; and Glanville is implored to fly to her rescue. A party of highwaymen, who are driven off by Glanville and the servants, are taken for so many generous knights, who, imagining that she and her cousin Charlotte are being ravished away, have nobly attempted their deliverance. At the Tower of London she asks the names of the illustrious knights to whom each suit of old armour belongs, and desires to be shown the place where they hold their jousts and tournaments. On being taken to the races, she is disappointed at not finding them more like the Olympic games, with the candidates riding in chariots; but nothing will persuade her, nevertheless, that the jockeys are not heroes of great distinction, who have come to compete, not for the sake of money or prizes, but for glory, and

in order to signalise themselves in the eyes of their divine mistresses.

The least satisfactory part of *The Female Quixote* is its conclusion, which is so lame as to lend some colour to a conjecture once made that the final chapter was written, not by Mrs. Lennox, but by Dr. Johnson. Walking one day by the river at Richmond, Arabella notices four horsemen riding along the road, and, imagining that they must necessarily be in pursuit of her for some bad purpose, she plunged into the Thames, thinking to escape by swimming to the other side, as Clelia, in similar circumstances, swam across the Tiber. But, swimming not being among her numerous accomplishments, she was ignominiously dragged out, half drowned. The result of this final escapade was a fever; her life was despaired of; and a worthy clergyman was called in to administer the last consolations of religion. But she recovered; and during her convalescence the worthy divine seized the opportunity to convert her, by grave and solid argument, from the error of her romantic way. Nothing then remained, of course, but to marry her off to her constant and sorely tried lover, Glanville. Now it is obvious, as Mrs. Barbauld pointed out, that Arabella ought to have been cured, not by

the grave moralising of a divine, but by ridicule ; by falling into some too absurd mistake ; or by finding herself on the brink of becoming the prey of some romantic but disreputable scoundrel. The style of this eleventh chapter of the concluding book is certainly very like that of a chapter of *Rasselas*, but seeing that in it Mr. Glanville speaks of the 'inimitable beauties' of *The Rambler*, and of the author of that work as 'the greatest genius of the present age,' it is impossible to believe that it can have been written by Johnson.

A brief abstract such as the foregoing may perhaps represent the 'Female Quixote' as a particularly absurd and tiresome person for a heroine ; and so, but for the fine tact of the authoress, she must inevitably have become. But Arabella, like her prototype, the Spanish Don, is also shown to possess a number of really admirable qualities both of head and of heart ; and these, together with her eloquence in expounding her heroical sentiments, her fine manners, and her remarkable personal beauty, mitigate the ridiculousness of her position, and engage the reader's sympathies. Fielding, in a highly eulogistic review of the book, in his *Covent Garden Journal*, went so far as to declare that, in some respects, it surpassed even the masterpiece of

Cervantes, of which it was an imitation. It is certainly much more credible, as he said, that a young lady's head should be turned by the reading of romances than that an old gentleman's should; and in Arabella's case the aberration is satisfactorily accounted for by her peculiar education and surroundings. Moreover, although Arabella mistakes a highwayman for a knight, or a gardener for a nobleman in disguise, she never approaches the absurdity of imagining wine-bags or windmills to be human beings, or flocks of sheep to be armies of soldiers. Her character, too, which is one of great innocence, integrity, and benevolence, Fielding holds to be more endearing than that of Don Quixote, and her situation more interesting; while, in place of the Don's disconnected adventures, Mrs. Lennox gives us a regular story. All which we may admit to be true enough, though it was certainly not to Mrs. Lennox's advantage for Fielding to attempt a detailed comparison of her work with one that is unique, incomparable, and inimitable. We may, however, heartily agree with him that *The Female Quixote* is a work of true humour, which is instructive as well as diverting, and, on the whole, ‘a most extraordinary and most excellent performance.’

## A RADICAL LADY OF THE LAST GENERATION

WHEN the widow of George Grote, Banker, Radical M.P., historian, scholar, and philosopher, died in 1878, her surviving relatives requested Lady Eastlake to prepare a biography of her. And, although Mrs. Grote had neither gained much celebrity as an authoress, nor taken any personal part in public events, she had been for many years a well-known figure in the political, literary, and musical society of London; she had been the semi-official hostess of the Philosophical Radicals, who, though small in numbers, were great in ability, and comprised some of the most distinguished members of the Reformed Parliament of 1832; and she was, moreover, a woman of such original character and remarkable attainments as to justify a separate memoir. Lady Eastlake's 'Sketch' of her venerated friend, however, is somewhat too subdued in tone. It certainly shows Mrs. Grote's generous nature, warm heart, and varied knowledge, in a very



*M<sup>rs</sup> Grote (Harriet Lewin) aged 14.  
her brother Frederick aged 8.  
& her sister Frances aged 2*





pleasant light, but it exhibits little or nothing of the strongly marked individuality, the independence, originality, and sovereign contempt for social conventionalities, which were so conspicuous in her original, and which called for a more highly coloured picture. It was not until these last-named characteristics had been drawn for us by Fanny Kemble, Mrs. Simpson, and other friends, that, by putting the various accounts together, we were able to obtain a complete and life-like portrait. Mrs. Grote seems to have contemplated the possibility of a biography, for she at one time wrote out a good deal of autobiographical matter, chiefly concerning the period of her childhood. But, at a later date, in disgust at what she considered the abominable indiscretions of certain literary executors, she ruthlessly destroyed a mass of what must have been extremely interesting correspondence, including a large number of letters which she had received from Sydney Smith. It has been said that people's characters may be known as well by the letters their friends write to them, as by those they themselves write to others. There appear to be but few of either kind by which we may appreciate the character of Mrs. Grote; and this is the more unfortunate as, according to Abraham Hayward,

her letters contained more indication of her intellectual powers than did any of her published books.

From her own autobiographical sketch we learn that she was born at 'The Ridgway,' a house near Southampton, on 1st July 1792. Her father, Thomas Lewin, who had been for some years in the Madras Civil Service, appears to have been a brilliant kind of man, a true specimen of the 'fine gentleman' of his day. He returned from India in the same vessel as the divorced Madame Grand from Pondicherry, and lived with her in considerable style in Paris for some years previous to the Revolution. When he left France for England he settled an annuity on her, which she continued to enjoy even after she became Princess Talleyrand. Soon after his arrival in England he fell in love with a child, daughter of General Hale, and married her before she had attained the age of sixteen. Harriet says that her mother's younger babes were dolls for her to play with, but that the grown children were never treated by her as companions. Nevertheless, they seem to have had a particularly good time of it. They commandeered boats, and rowed on the river Itchin, whenever their governess could be eluded, with the result that they frequently had to be

rescued off the mud-banks ; they rode horses, whenever they could catch them in the fields, barebacked, with a bit of packthread round their noses ; they hid themselves on the top of a huge stack of faggots, where they would lie quiet for hours, making figures in wet clay ; and of course Harriet, no less than her brothers, was an adept at climbing trees. Even when out walking in London, in charge of the coachman, she could not be prevented from sometimes going up the old pollarded elms in the Green Park. For the rest, to use her own words—‘ I was forward in my studies, full of capacity and talents, and of a loving, gay temperament, which rose above all suffering, and cheered my comrades to mirth and enterprise.’ Much of her training she appears to have owed to her father, who was a devotee of music and French literature, and who instituted family readings from Shakespeare, in which all who were competent took part. And from a neighbouring family she imbibed that taste for classical music which was one of the chief resources of her life.

After a time the Lewins removed to a house at Bexley Heath, within a few miles of Beckenham, in Kent, where the Grote family were established. Young George Grote was introduced to them by a friend, about 1815, and at once fell in love with

the brilliant Harriet. But a treacherous rival having persuaded him that she was pre-engaged, he retired disconsolate, and his father, ascertaining the state of the case, extracted a promise from him that he would never propose marriage to anybody without first obtaining the paternal consent. Mr. Grote wished his son to marry a city heiress, and Mr. Lewin's £3000 a year was accounted a poor fortune for a man who was, as his daughter phrases it, 'water-logged with a family of twelve children.' Intercourse with the Lewins was consequently broken off, and it was not until George happened accidentally to meet Harriet in 1818 that he learned of his friend's treachery. He immediately interceded with his father, and at last received a grudging consent that he might marry the lady of his choice after a period of two years. The young people agreed to make the best of a bad bargain, and set about conducting their love-making after a fashion entirely their own. They seldom met, but Grote set her themes on various subjects, gave her books to read, and required her to send him a digest of them. They kept diaries for each other's benefit, and she seems to have set earnestly to work to prepare herself by serious study to become his

companion and a sharer in his intellectual interests. His diary, as transmitted to her from time to time, contained entries such as the following:—

*Friday, March 26th.*—Rose at 6. Read and meditated Kant for some time; wrote out my observations of Foreign trade. Between 4 and 5 some more of Kant. Dined at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 5; played on bass for 1 hour; drank tea and attempted to read some Kant in the evening; but found my eyes so weak that I was compelled to desist, and to think without book. Bed at 11.

*Saturday, March 27th.*—Rose at 6. Finished my remarks on Foreign trade, and enclosed them to Ricardo. Studied some more of Kant. Went to Falcon Square and to Guildhall this day. Dined at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 5; played on the bass for 1 hour; just as I was going to drink tea, George Norman appeared, and I was delighted to see him back again. Had some very interesting conversation about Ireland. After his departure I read a chapter in Ricardo's *Pol. Econ.* Bed at 11.

The obduracy of the close-fisted parent showed no signs of relaxing, and the lovers became tired of waiting, so one Sunday morning in March 1820 they were married at Bexley Church in time for the young lady to take her place at the breakfast-table as if nothing had happened. Her father was told a few days after, but Grote's father not for some weeks. Of course the offence was soon condoned, and the young couple were established in a house adjoining the paternal bank in Thread-

needle Street. They were restricted to a small allowance, and George was kept strictly tied to the banking business; but they lived out of the City as much as they could on account of her delicate health, and after 1826 they were able to do so altogether. Grote continued to direct the studies of his young wife in those branches of knowledge which are generally neglected in a woman's education, 'above all, logic, metaphysics, and politics'; and having but little leisure, would not give up his time to any but such associates as were at once congenial and profitable. The elder Mill came frequently to see them, dining at 'Threddle,' as she called the banking-house, at least once a week; and amongst other eminent persons who sought their society between 1822 and 1830 she mentions John Black, of the *Morning Chronicle*, Thomas Campbell, the poet, John and Charles Austin, John Romilly, Charles Buller, Lord William Bentinck, and John Stuart Mill, with Mrs. John Austin and a few other female friends. At 'Threddle,' she declares, they lived in two worlds—the ancient and the modern: Plato and Aristotle representing the one, Kant, Bentham, and James Mill the other. A society of enthusiastic young logicians met there every

Wednesday and Saturday at the early hour of 8.30 A.M., and broke their fast on the psychology of Hartley or the *Analysis* of James Mill. Young Mrs. Grote quizzed them, but at the same time she made herself sufficiently mistress of their subject of study to take an intelligent interest in its progress, or to give a shrewd thrust, on occasion, to any outsider who might venture on a criticism of it.

In 1830 Mr. Grote, senr., died, and George became a full partner in the bank, inheriting also the Lincolnshire estates and a fortune of £40,000. Two years later he was induced to stand for Parliament, and was returned for the City of London at the top of the poll. His wife threw herself ardently into the Parliamentary struggle, and for the succeeding nine years, during which Grote was the most distinguished Parliamentary representative of what was called the Westminster School of Philosophical Radicals, her house was the social meeting-point of the party. Being an excellent woman of business, she at the same time took the entire management of his landed property into her own hands, and relieved him of all trouble on that score. From 1832 to 1837 they lived chiefly at Dulwich Wood, but a house was

subsequently taken in Eccleston Street; and here Mrs. Grote gathered about her, not only the politicians belonging to her husband's party, but also a choice society of musicians and artists. Jenny Lind, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Liszt, Lablache, Adelaide Kemble, and Ary Scheffer were some of the various artists she was proud to number amongst her acquaintance, and whom she loved, feasted, amused, befriended, and, as Lady Eastlake calls it, patronised.

Her hospitality was very beneficial to Grote. It counteracted the retiring scholar's tendency to undue absorption in his work, and afforded opportunity for the development of the exquisite courtesy of his nature. As Lady Eastlake puts it, 'each gave and took an education. He endowed her mind with a more solid basis; she fashioned, mounted, framed and glazed him.' If a gallop through Burnham Beeches, a game of billiards or of whist, a quartette of Beethoven, or the last new opera, each and all awakened in him a sense of hearty though temperate enjoyment, and prevented his ever becoming a mere recluse and bookworm, this was due to the influence of his wife. And a personal friend of both, writing in 1873, maintains that her influence went much

further than this. She was the wing of the bird, he says, the sail of the ship; and her wit, vivacity, and power of initiation, urged him onwards to the full exercise of his powers. 'Even to the gravest pursuits and achievements of politics and scholarship she gave a motive force; insomuch that it may be doubted whether they would have been accomplished at all without her.'

Parliamentary matters, however, did not shape themselves to Grote's liking, and the Westminster philosophical Radicalism made little headway. By 1836 the party had dwindled to such an extent that Charles Buller declared his belief that ere long only he and Grote would be left to 'tell' Molesworth. And in 1837 we find Mrs. Grote writing to Léon Faucher that she is 'sick and weary of the name of politics,' and glad the tedious session is coming to an end. 'Mr. Grote and I, who formerly took so much interest in all that related to public affairs, now tacitly agree to avoid the subject.'

It was about this time that she first became acquainted with Sydney Smith. He writes to her in June 1839, inviting her to 'a real philosophical breakfast, all mind-and-matter men,' and adds:—

I am truly glad, my dear Mrs. Grote, to add you to the number of my friends (*i.e.* if you will be added). I saw in the moiety of a moment that you were made of fine materials, and put together by a master workman, and I ticketed you accordingly.

He goes on, presumably with a subtle reference to her Utilitarian and anti-theological surroundings, to assure her that, if she honours him with her notice, she will find him a theologian and a bigot, even to martyrdom, and that if she comes to hear him preach at St. Paul's she need have no delusive hope of a slumber, for he preaches violently, and there is a strong smell of sulphur about his sermons! Later in the same year he addresses her again, this time from his new parsonage at Combe Florey:—

Your neighbours, the ——, have been staying here; they talked of you eulogistically, in which I cordially joined; but when they came to details, I found they principally admired you for a recipe for brown bread, which is made by a baker near them according to your rules. I beg this recipe: and offer you, in return, a mode of curing hams. What a charming and sentimental commerce! . . . Adieu! It would have been a real pleasure to me to see you here: pray come before you die, or rather I should say before I die.

The visit, thus characteristically referred to, was made in the following summer, when Mrs. Grote

travelled down to Somersetshire, a journey of one hundred and fifty miles, in her own postchaise, taking Mrs. Jameson with her; halting at Wilton House to see Lord Pembroke's pictures, and at Stourhead to see Sir Richard Hoare's collection of pictures and antiquities on the way, and taking Leigh Court and the Bowood picture-galleries on their return journey. Sydney Smith got the impression that the basis of her character was rural, and that she was intended for a country clergyman's wife, 'but whatever she was intended for,' he writes to Murchison, 'she is an extraordinarily clever woman, and we all liked her very much.' It is a great pity that Mrs. Grote's fears of the indiscretion of literary executors caused her to destroy so many of Sydney's letters, for the few that have been preserved are uncommonly good reading. He writes in July 1843 to express his sorrow that she had not paid him a visit as arranged, and tells her 'the temptation not to come, when you were engaged to come, is more than you can resist; try refusing, and see what that will do.' He sends her potatoes of his own growing, and when she remarks on the smallness of some among them, he says:—

You complain of the smallness of the potatoes: let me

suggest the romantic plan of having the potatoes picked: the large ones reserved for your own table, the small ones for the pigs. It is by this ingenious and complicated process that the potatoes you get from the greengrocer in London are managed.

It was at a dinner-party at Sydney Smith's that Fanny Kemble first met Mrs. Grote, and found her to be one of the cleverest and most eccentric women in London, 'the female centre of the Radical party in politics—a sort of not-young-or-handsome feminine oracle, among a set of very clever, half-heathenish men, in whose drawing-room Sydney Smith used to say he always expected to find an altar to Zeus.' She tells us that:—

Mrs. Grote's appearance was extremely singular—'striking' is, I think, the most appropriate word for it. She was very tall, square built, and high shouldered, her hands and arms, feet and legs (the latter she was by no means averse to displaying) were uncommonly handsome and well made. Her face was rather that of a clever man than a woman, and I used to think there was some resemblance between herself and our piratical friend, Trelawney.

Her taste in dress was eccentric. One friend remembers her as always, when in town, wearing short skirts, no crinoline, white stockings, and high shoes. But Fanny Kemble seems to have been

most impressed by her passion for discordant colours.

The first time I ever saw her she was dressed in a bright brimstone-coloured silk gown, made so short as to show her feet and ankles, having on her head a white satin hat, with a forest of white feathers; and I remember her standing, with her feet wide apart and her arms akimbo, challenging me upon some political question, by which and her appearance I was much astonished and a little frightened. One evening she came to my sister's house dressed entirely in black, but with scarlet shoes on, with which I suppose she was particularly pleased, for she lay on a sofa, with her feet higher than her head, American fashion, the better to display or contemplate them.

Mrs. Simpson says the red shoes were worn because Sydney Smith professed to admire them; but we may presume this was only his fun, for Fanny Kemble relates that she was once sitting by Sydney Smith, at a party, when Mrs. Grote came in with a rose-coloured turban on her head, at which he suddenly exclaimed, 'Now I know the meaning of the word grotesque.' Sydney Smith really had a most cordial liking for both Mrs. Grote and her husband, but it could hardly be expected that he would refrain from occasionally poking fun at them. 'I like them, I like them,' he used to say. 'I like him, he is so ladylike; and I like her, she is such a perfect

gentleman !' His epithet 'grotesque' was certainly very applicable. One morning she took two young girl friends for a drive in her 'buggy,' in which there were only two seats, so that one of the girls had to cling on as best she could. But Mrs. Grote, in grey hat, with green feather and long green veil, dashed on in this style down Bond Street and through the crowded Park, unconscious of any absurdity, and totally unable to understand what the people were staring at. In the country she adopted another equally eccentric style of dress, going about with a man's hat on her head, a stick in her hand, and a coachman's box-coat, of drab cloth, with manifold capes, over her short petticoats.

The Grotes had a small and modest country-house, with charming old-fashioned garden and grounds, in the neighbourhood of the magnificent woodland scenery of Burnham Beeches. It was to this quiet spot that she brought Jenny Lind, whenever that exquisite singer was overwrought with the rush of London life, and here Mendelssohn, while on a visit to her house, found the inspiration of much of the music of his *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Fanny Kemble paid many visits to Burnham. On one of these visits a most ludicrous scene took place. Besides Fanny and her sister Adelaide, there were

present Chorley, musical critic of the *Athenæum*, and Dessauer, the Viennese composer, a humorist, she says, of a curious, quaint, and nervously irritable type. Mrs. Grote had been stalking about the place in her masculine attire, alternately superintending household matters, and discussing questions of musical taste and criticism.

She had left us to our own devices, and we were all in the garden. I was sitting in a swing, and my sister, Dessauer, and Chorley were lying on the lawn at my feet, when presently, striding towards us, appeared the extraordinary figure of Mrs. Grote, who, as soon as she was within speaking-trumpet distance, hailed us with a stentorian challenge about some detail of dinner—I think it was whether the majority voted for bacon and peas, or bacon and beans. Having duly settled this momentous question, as Mrs. Grote turned and marched away, Dessauer—who had been sitting straight up, listening with his head first on one side and then on the other, like an eagerly intelligent terrier, taking no part in the culinary controversy (indeed his entire ignorance of English necessarily disqualified him for even comprehending it), but staring intently, with open eyes and mouth, at Mrs. Grote—suddenly began, with his hands and lips, to imitate the rolling of a drum, and then broke out aloud with '*Malbrook s'en va-t-en guerre,*' etc.; whereupon the terrible lady faced rightabout, like a soldier, and, planting her stick in the ground, surveyed Dessauer with an awful countenance. The wretched little man grew red, then purple, and then black in the face, with fear and shame; and, exclaiming in his agony, '*Ah, bonté divine! elle*

*m'a compris!*' rolled over and over on the lawn as if he had a fit. Mrs. Grote majestically waved her hand, and with magnanimous disdain of her small adversary turned and departed, and we remained horror-stricken at the effect of this involuntary tribute of Dessauer's to her martial air and deportment.

When she returned, however, it was merely to plunge into an animated discussion on a musical subject; and, some piece from the *Iphigenia* being mentioned, she called for her violoncello, and proceeded to play for them, with admirable taste and expression, some of Glück's noble music. Mrs. Grote was a musical amateur of unusual knowledge, good taste, and considerable executive ability. Many composers and performers found her to be also a cordial and hospitable friend and hostess. Jenny Lind she took under her special protection, and not only brought her out, but managed all her earliest business arrangements in London, got up parties for her in Eccleston Street, introduced her to the great world of London society, carried her off whenever in need of rest to Burnham Beeches, and even went the length of travelling with her in the provinces. She was very proud of her *protégée* and the interest that she excited. At a private concert at Lansdowne House, to which Mdlle. Lind had been invited as an auditor, she tells us:—

I was not a little amused to observe the Duke of Wellington approach with the intention of making his bow to Lady Lansdowne; but finding it hopeless to catch her attention—so engrossed was she with Mdlle. Lind—he quietly passed unnoticed into the Sculpture Gallery, where a vocal concert was about to commence.

Jenny Lind, however, proved restive under all these flattering attentions of Society, and confided to her chaperon, as they drove away, that she would much rather be wandering with her about Burnham Beeches. When there, she used to study the music of her new *rôles* among the old trees, and Mrs. Grote relates that she has often found her, seated on the clubbed root of one, with the book laid open upon her knee, and warbling, in a low tone, the music of the score.

Another artistic *protégée* who was not quite such a success, was the celebrated dancer, Fanny Ellsler, of whom Mrs. Grote tried to make what she called ‘an honest woman.’ There were no children to the Grotes, and it was presumably a romantic impulse which prompted them to practically adopt Fanny Ellsler and the little girl who was born three months after her arrival in England. Fanny was beautiful, undisciplined, and capricious, to say no worse. She had been educated by Frederick von Gentz, the

German writer and diplomatist, and while still a young girl had become his mistress. She achieved great popularity as a dancer, and appears to have been able to impart an element not merely of the dramatic, but of the tragic, into her dancing. Mrs. Grote always maintained that her genius lay quite as much in her head as in her heels, and strenuously endeavoured to procure her acceptance in London society. But she failed either to do this, or to make Fanny 'an honest woman.' Fanny Kemble says :—

Mrs. Grote told me in the course of conversation on the subject of Mdlle. Ellsler, that when the latter went to America, she (Mrs. Grote) had undertaken the entire charge of her child, a lovely little girl of about six years old. 'All I said to her was,' said this strange, kind-hearted woman, 'Well, Fanny, send the brat to me; I don't ask you whose child it is, and I don't care, so long as it isn't that fool D'Orsay's, and I'll take the best care of it I can.'

Lady Eastlake informs us that the Grotes tended and cherished this child, Thérèse, as if it were their own, and suffered severely when, on more than one occasion, the erratic mother swooped down and tore it from their arms. Ultimately, however, she was happily married to a worthy man, an officer in the Austrian army; but she died after a very few years,

leaving one child, a girl, who was several times brought to England by the widowed father on a visit to Mr. and Mrs. Grote, and to whom Mrs. Grote left a legacy at her death.

In 1841 Grote refused to be again nominated for Parliament, and in 1843 he withdrew from the banking-house, in order that he might resume his history, which had perforce been laid aside during the previous ten or twelve years. When in 1845 the first two volumes were ready for publication, he modestly supposed that, having little literary reputation, no bookseller was likely to face the risk, and that he would have to print at his own expense. But Mrs. Grote was of a different opinion. She says in her biography of the historian that :—

Such was Grote's habitual aversion to any personal trouble about business matters—except where obligations towards other parties were in question, when he was scrupulous in their discharge—that the negotiations fell entirely to my share. I finally decided to make the offer of 'our History' to Mr. Murray. . . . When he heard that John Murray was willing to publish it at his own risk, Grote said—'I only hope the poor man will not be a loser by me.'

It is perhaps scarcely necessary to say that the result was eminently satisfactory both to publisher and author. The latter, out of the profits of the

book, built a small country-house at East Burnham, which received the eccentric, if appropriate, name of 'History Hut.' Mrs. Grote was in the habit of telling a number of anecdotes illustrative of her husband's simplicity, and utter unconsciousness of his own celebrity. Walking in the park, he would perhaps notice that one or two persons looked at him with some attention. He would at once turn to his wife in alarm, 'Have I got any dirt on my face, Harriet? Is there anything the matter with my hat?'—and he would clutch his headgear with both hands. 'What on earth are those people looking at me for?' And she would calmly reply—'Because you are George Grote—that's all!' Another story described how, when on a visit to Cambridge, Grote wished to see the Professor of Natural History, but was told that gentleman was so busy dissecting something that he could not be interrupted—'strong magnifying power—powerful light—shirt sleeves up—would not be bothered with anybody.' The modest historian would have retired, but his wife persisted that it was Mr. Grote who wanted to see the Professor. 'What!' he cried, 'Mr. Grote! Give me my coat; I must wash my hands'; in a minute he had transformed himself, and would not let them go for two hours.

From the time of Grote's first visit to Paris in 1830, when they made acquaintance with the Says and the Comtes, with Odillon Barrot, Léon Faucher, and other Liberal leaders, and paid a long-remembered visit to the venerable patriot Lafayette, Mrs. Grote kept up a correspondence with literary and political Frenchmen of note, and became in fact one of the chief intellectual intermediaries of her time between France and England. She first met De Tocqueville on his visit to England in 1835, and thus describes him in her journal :—

M. de Tocqueville—a small and delicate-looking young man—is a most engaging person. Full of intelligence and knowledge, free from boasting and self-sufficiency—of gentle manners, and handsome countenance. In conversing he displays a candid and unprejudiced mind—about thirty-two years of age, of a noble race in Normandy, and unmarried.

De Tocqueville, on his part, described her as the cleverest woman of his acquaintance ; and when he married, Madame de Tocqueville also became one of her most cherished friends. Writing to her in 1849, Mrs. Grote describes the private life of the other as—

A life so congenial with that which I have the advantage of leading and which seems to me singularly resemblant

with ours—without children—all in all to each other—the *man* a scholar—intellectually disposed and meditative, yet embracing the fatigues of a public function out of a sense of patriotic obligation; fond of seclusion, and refined in his sentiments; and fulfilling the gentler duties equally with the severer. Behold, my dear friend, a slight sketch which may serve for both the virtuous men whom we are so fortunate as to call by the sacred name of husband. This analogy in our position serves not unfrequently to revive the thoughts of you and your dear Alexis.'

And after De Tocqueville's death, in 1859, she writes :—

I am for the future safe from the disappearance of such a man from our sight. There is only *one* left whose death could cast me down so low, and God grant that I may go *myself* before *him*. . . . Whoever was honoured with the friendship of Alexis might be regarded as receiving 'La Croix d'honneur.'

Those who wondered at the remarkable conversational powers of Mrs. Grote, and the varied culture displayed in her letters, hardly gave her credit, perhaps, for the systematic study and hard labour of which these were the outcome. Lady Eastlake tells us that her friend commenced to keep note-books in 1827, and that these show the results of a very thorough examination of a variety of 'dry' subjects—our legislative system—the faulty administration of justice—English, French, and American

politics—farming, such as few women have even a superficial knowledge of, in addition to notes on literature, art, society, the opera and the stage. Amongst the earliest of the ‘notes’ is a thorough and elaborate analysis of our system of grand juries and its administrative defects! But, in spite of her associations, her political views were a long way from what we nowadays associate with the idea of Radicalism, philosophical or otherwise. Of course, she regarded the Reform Bill of 1832 as a great charter of justice and humanity, and the ballot, for which Grote struggled so valiantly throughout the whole of his Parliamentary career, as a necessity of that political freedom which she held should be wrung from its foes, even if the price to be paid for it were civil war. But her notion of the degree of ‘liberty’ to be accorded to the ‘outside public’ was strictly limited. She thought it was quite enough for the working-man to have a vote for members of Parliament, and that he should by no means be allowed to send his delegate, and afterwards prescribe to that delegate what line he should take on any given question. She complains of deputations besetting the executive Government in a way ‘quite unusual,’ regrets that the working-man is overstepping his legitimate functions, and

fears that the country is drifting into the condition of Roman times, when the *agora* was the theatre of public discussion! She believed in education to a very moderate extent, holding that the power of reading and writing, together with the habit of simple prayer, and equally simple religious maxims and Bible lessons, ought to be the limit of school teaching at the expense of the public. She would not even go the length of the 'three Rs,' and maintained that if the parents wished arithmetic superadded they ought to pay for it themselves. Our present system of free schools, and municipal training, to say nothing of the regulation of hours of labour and rates of wages, or the proposed free dinners, and old-age pensions, would have appeared to the Westminster Philosophical Radicals as nothing short of rank blasphemy. Both Mrs. Grote and her husband seem latterly to have receded somewhat from even their moderate original Radical standpoint. She hints at this in the biography.

Our hospitalities [she says] became rather more comprehensive in their scope as our Radical *habitués* fell out of favour with us both—we even went so far as to accept friendly overtures from Lord and Lady Holland, and to commence intercourse with Holland House, whither Grote

would never have consented to go in past times. We also were present at the Queen's Ball at Buckingham Palace, and this, too, without any twinges on his part.

And when Grote was offered a peerage by Mr. Gladstone in 1869, although he declined the honour without a moment's hesitation, it was not so much on the ground of his theoretical republicanism, or because he would have felt at all out of sympathy with the political atmosphere of the House of Lords, as because he had, he said, at the age of seventy-five an 'insuperable objection to altering the framework of his existence in any way.'

Mrs. Grote would certainly have been a unique peeress. We get a curious glimpse of her unconventional behaviour in Sir Joseph Crowe's *Reminiscences*. When Crowe was a young man of twenty-four, and on his way to take up the post of *Daily News* correspondent in Paris, he arrived at Folkestone, he says, at the same time as a strange lady, who attracted his attention.

I watched her playing billiards with the landlord of the Pavilion Hotel; a tall woman, with marked features and almost a masculine gait, who strode round the table with long and eager steps, and played a winning game with great gusto. At Boulogne, next night, we met at the railway station. I had taken a corner seat in a first-class carriage. She walked up and down, unable to find a similar one, and

at last addressed me, asking whether I would not give up my corner to her and take another place. I yielded to her request, and after the train started we got into conversation.

They naturally glided into a political discussion, and after a good deal of talk, chiefly on foreign affairs, she seemed astonished at the extent of his knowledge, and inquired if he were a diplomat. On learning that he was a journalist, she complimented him on being so well informed, and asked if he knew her—her name was Grote. Of course, as a pressman, he had heard of her as the wife of the Historian of Greece, and also as the special protector of the great singer Jenny Lind. They then compared notes as to Paris celebrities, and finding that they were both equally acquainted with Léon Faucher, she asked him to visit her on her arrival in Paris.

Some notion of Mrs. Grote's literary tastes and opinions may be gathered from her correspondence with Abraham Hayward. She made his acquaintance in 1856 by writing to him on the subject of an *Edinburgh Review* article of his on Henri Beyle; and their friendship grew strong and intimate. Hayward said she was one of the three or four best, kindest, high-minded and highly cultivated women he ever knew; that she was an admirable

judge of character, and so excellent a critic that he never felt satisfied with any of his own writings till approved by her. She was not to be weighed by her books, he said, nor hardly even by her letters, though these better exhibited her intellectual powers. But, as he wrote to Lady Eastlake :—

Where she excelled, where she brought out the best qualities of her mind and her wide range of knowledge, was in her conversation, which was rich, full, and varied to an extraordinary degree. She talked with equal ease and spirit on the lightest and the gravest topics, but when the subject lent itself to the serious mode of treatment, she was fond of penetrating below the surface, of taking the philosophical view, and of deducing something like a general conclusion or moral. I do not believe I ever passed an hour with her without being instructed as well as gratified.

She was by no means given to the literary commonplaces; her judgments, whatever else may be said of them, were her own, and they were expressed in her own forcible, if sometimes overcharged, language. Apropos of Hayward's sketch of Prosper Mérimée, she says: 'No, I never did contemplate such a ruin, such a wilful disfigurement by bloated self-conceit of an originally fine subject, as this highly gifted coxcomb of yours. Cynic is too honest a designation for him. Coxcombry *pur et simple* predominates in all he does,

says, or pretends to think.' She makes the singular pronouncement that Sainte-Beuve was a 'literary journeyman,' adding: 'We know the physiology of the creature. It is creditable to English society that it scarcely finds its way into a decent *salon*,'—decent *salons*, we may presume, being reserved for the like of Fanny Ellsler! Agreeing with the *dictum* of her husband that no one ought to attempt a serious historical or philosophical work unless he were quite independent in his fortunes, she yet maintains that poverty is necessary for the production of artistic genius, and she not obscurely hints that a little immorality may be an advantage also. The artistic nature, she says, is bent upon producing 'effect' by any and every device within its reach. It is therefore of little use laying bare the daily habits and *rappports* of a genius like Goethe. 'Great artists must be for the most part the reverse of virtuous, *voilà!*' In her *Life* of Ary Scheffer she made the mistake of suppressing or glossing over his faults and foibles in attempting to make him out a virtuous 'pattern man'; and although she imagines herself to have somehow succeeded in this particular case, she lays it down as a canon of art that virtue is uninteresting.

What may be called her domestic philosophy,

which she was in the habit of condensing into pithy maxims, is of far less questionable purport. Lady Eastlake tells us that no humdrum woman knew more than she did of the details of household matters. 'She knew how everything should be done, from the darning of a sock to the building of a house ; and she could generally show a better way of doing most ordinary things.' One of her favourite maxims was—'The household virtues are the basis of everything.' And she was a great stickler for order and punctuality. 'Never, if you can help it, break an engagement,' she would say ; 'you know not what other engagements you derange.' Another highly useful precept which she impressed upon her younger friends was, 'Learn to say *no* ; it will save you a world of trouble in your life.' She disliked the restlessness of the young and of the higher classes, 'always dependent on outer impressions ; never able to live a day on themselves.' Moreover, people should 'keep to simple and wholesome pleasures ; they have no excess.' She once said to a friend of ardent temperament, 'You are fourteen years younger than I, but you will wear yourself out sooner—*car vous voulez toujours des émotions fortes*.' Her acquaintances were frequently ticketed off with significant nicknames ; a subservient wife

was called the 'door-mat,' a young amateur was a 'dab,' and certain types of character became 'the porcelain woman,' or 'the pinchbeck man.' She is reported to have habitually used strong language to her servants. Lady Eastlake merely says that she called a spade a spade, but Fanny Kemble declares that her familiar language among her intimates was something that could only be believed by those who heard it; 'it was technical to a degree that was amazing.' She never seemed at all aware of the startling effect she sometimes produced, but spoke with the most straightforward unconsciousness and unconcern. The solitary instance which Fanny Kemble gives, however, does not seem particularly shocking. Mrs. Grote was once speaking of Audubon's work on ornithology, at a dinner-party in her own house, and reciting some of his personal adventures which had pleased her particularly: 'He was once almost starving in the woods, you know,' she said, 'when he found some kind of wild creature which he immediately disembowelled and devoured.' She was certainly remarkably blunt and outspoken, especially to her female friends, of whose brain power, speaking generally, she had a very low opinion. Adelaide Kemble once mentioned that she had received a letter from the great German scholar, Waelcker. 'Who? What?

You? Waelcker write to *you!*' exclaimed Mrs. Grote, with an undisguised amazement which Adelaide's sister mildly describes as more apparent than courteous. Yet there is ample testimony that those who knew her loved her, and those who knew her best trusted her most. Lady Eastlake says: 'Friends depended on her; children delighted in her; servants stayed with her; all obeyed her. But there was, perhaps, no neutral ground on the way. You feared her till you loved her.' Some of her friends, it may be imagined, continued to fear even after they had learned to love her. At any rate, she exercised her undoubted powers of ruling people by keeping them up to her required standard both in small things and in great. For instance, when Monckton Milnes came after eleven o'clock to one of her parties, which had been announced for 'from nine to eleven,' she stood at the top of the staircase and forbade him to come up. And the following letter is a specimen of the way in which she would sometimes give outspoken advice to a female relative:—

It is clear that unless you turn over a new leaf your domestic comfort will be in imminent danger of being stranded. You have a good understanding and a good heart, and it would be a sin and a shame to nullify these for want of

a little self-catechising and discipline. T—— is a man of very fine morality, based on the soundest views of human obligations, and you must not expect to have all the lesser amenities and ornamental qualities combined with the sober, rational busy citizen character. He treats you most kindly, but will not consent to take the exact impress of *your* habits and tastes, and to reflect all your emotions. Be content, therefore, my dear ——, to trot along by his side, leaning on him for support and sympathy in the large concerns of life, and *grazing* as you go along to amuse your own individual existence. The *indoor* eccentricities you must connive at, thanking your stars that he allows *you*, on your side, such latitude also for infirmity and caprices; and so no more on this topic.'

As soon as she had recovered from the shock of Grote's death in 1871, she set to work on his biography. The book was entitled *The Personal Life of George Grote*, for of her husband as historian, scholar, philosopher, or critic she did not hold herself competent to speak. As far back as 1866 she had begun to collect material for the purpose, in the shape of such old letters and journals as had been preserved, and in her preface to the volume, published in 1873, when she was in her eighty-first year, she tells us what was Grote's view of the matter.

Being thus occupied on one morning of (I think) the year 1867, Mr. Grote came into the room. 'What are you so busy

over, there, H.?' he inquired. 'Well, I am arranging some materials for a sketch of your life, which I have been urgently invited to write by several of our best friends.' '*My* life!' exclaimed Mr. Grote, 'why there is absolutely nothing to tell!' 'Not in the way of adventures, I grant; but there *is* something nevertheless—your life is the history of a mind.' '*That* is it!' he rejoined with animation, 'but can you tell it?' 'It is what I intend to try. You see, unless *I* give some account of your youth and early manhood, no other hand can furnish the least information concerning it.' 'Nothing can be more certain—you *are* the only person living who knows anything about me during the first half of my existence.'

This short colloquy ended, she says, the subject was never resumed between them, and she tells the story so that when the public learn that no other pen could have produced the biography of the Historian of Greece, they will accord it all the indulgence it needs.

In 1873 John Stuart Mill died, and she writes to Dean Stanley that for a day or two after the news reached her she was really incapable of busying herself with anything, and lay fallow, as it were, hoping the pain would grow bearable after a space. Her own life was prolonged for five years more. She had once prided herself to Sydney Smith on her patience in enduring bores. 'That may be, my dear Grote,' he said, 'but you do not conceal your sufferings.' To-

wards the end, however, she grew more tender and tolerant, enduring even bores without betraying it. But she never lost her wonderful freshness. 'Her impressions were as lively,' writes Hayward, 'her sympathies as warm, her affections as expansive, when she was past eighty, as they could have been at eighteen.' When she died in 1878 at the age of eighty-six, Lady Eastlake wrote: 'I can have no higher ambition than to live as wisely and as well as she did.' That, of course, is a purely personal note of appreciation, possible only to an intimate friend. But we of the present generation may at least discern the lineaments of a nature endowed with exceptionally fine qualities both of head and of heart—highly cultivated, self-possessed, practical, shrewd, humorous, generous, just—a combination rare among women, and forming an original, eccentric, attractive 'character.'





*The Hon. Mrs. Norton.*  
*From the Picture by Hayter.*

## THE REAL 'DIANA OF THE CROSSWAYS'

IN a brief prefatory note to one of his finest books, Mr. George Meredith says: 'A lady of high distinction for wit and beauty, the daughter of an illustrious Irish house, came under the shadow of a calumny. It has latterly been examined and exposed as baseless. The story of *Diana of the Crossways* is to be read as fiction.' The utterance is somewhat cryptic: and probably a majority of his readers have been content to accept Diana as George Meredith's ideal of womanhood, as merely a fascinating poetic creation, without inquiring too closely whether such a radiant vision of beauty and wit ever had any corporeal existence. We expect the heroine of every novel to be a beauty; and we are duly grateful whenever, on rare occasions, the author can also endow her with wit. When, in the story before us, Lord Larrian declares that, wherever Diana appears, 'the first person falls to the second rank, and accepts it humbly,' or that 'she makes everything in the room dust round a blazing

jewel,' we are quite ready to agree with Lady Dunstane that the sight of beauty has turned a soldier into a poet; but we are disposed to give to the author the entire credit both of the metamorphosis and of the vision that caused it. In the present instance, however, this would be hardly fair; for, although the materials for a sketch are deplorably scanty, enough remains to show that, in the career of the Honble. Mrs. Norton, the novelist had ready to his hand the tragic story of the life of a beautiful and witty woman, the like of whom (to use his own words), the 'dowering heavens' have certainly not showered any too plentifully upon us.

Mrs. Norton came of a family renowned for genius, for beauty, and for wit. Her father was Richard Brinsley Sheridan's favourite, brilliant, unfortunate son Tom, who, in 1805, married Caroline, daughter of Lady Elizabeth Macdonell and Sir George Campbell. Tom Sheridan died at the Cape in 1817, and his widow soon afterwards settled down in a small house in Great George Street, Westminster, close to Storey's Gate, where, with but scanty means, eked out with a small pension to which she became entitled at her husband's death, she contrived to pay off his debts, and to give every necessary educational advantage to her six children. She

was of a literary turn, as befitted one who had married into the Sheridan family, and one at least out of several novels which she wrote is said to be of more than average merit. The earliest glimpse we get of our 'Diana' is in Fanny Kemble's *Records*:—

When first I knew Caroline Sheridan [she writes] she had not long been married to the Hon. George Norton. She was splendidly handsome, of an un-English character of beauty, her rather large and heavy head and features recalling the grandest Grecian and Italian models, to the latter of whom her rich colouring and blue-black braids of hair gave her an additional resemblance. Though neither so perfectly lovely as the Duchess of Somerset, nor so perfectly charming as Lady Dufferin, she produced a far more striking impression than either of them, by the combination of the poetical genius with which she alone of the three was gifted, with the brilliant wit and power of repartee which they (especially Lady Dufferin) possessed in common with her, united to the exceptional beauty with which they were all three endowed. . . . Mrs. Norton was extremely epigrammatic in her talk, and comically dramatic in her manner of narrating things.

When we learn that the mother was also a beauty, and, at this period, might almost have been taken for the sister of her own tall and stately daughters, and that the three sons (as Lord Dufferin declares) were each over six feet in height, handsome, clever and witty, we can well believe Fanny Kemble that she

never saw such a bunch of beautiful creatures all growing on one stem. And we may acquit young Benjamin Disraeli of any extraordinary exaggeration when he pronounced them the handsomest family in the world. Fanny Kemble says she expressed her general admiration to Mrs. Norton, who looked round the room, and then said with much complacency, 'Yes, we *are* rather good-looking people.' A combination of beauty and wit such as is here described would, at any time, prove an irresistible attraction, so that it is scarcely matter for surprise that the small drawing-room in the 'tiny mansion' in Great George Street soon became almost as crowded with a brilliant set of wits and politicians as the *salons* of Lady Holland or Lady Ashburton. Caroline was already a contributor to the 'Annuals' and 'Keepsakes' which were then in vogue, and both she and Helen not only wrote and composed the music for the songs which they sang with such charming effect, but, as Lord Dufferin assures us, before either of them was twenty-one they received £100 from a publisher for a collection of songs which they had contributed between them.

While yet a mere girl of nineteen, Caroline was married to the Hon. George Norton, a barrister, who, though next in remainder to his brother, Lord

Grantley, was possessed of but small means, and, as events proved, had neither the talent nor the industry to carve out a career for himself in the profession of his choice. With the view of augmenting their comparatively small income, Mrs. Norton definitely entered on a literary career. In 1829 appeared *The Sorrows of Rosalie*, and, in 1831, *The Undying One*, two volumes of poetry which showed at least that she had the qualities of pathos and passion, with no mean power of versification, after the then fashionable manner of Byron. She had already attained some measure of celebrity as an author when we get our next glimpse of her in one of Disraeli's letters to his sister in 1833 :—

Yesterday I dined with the Nortons; it was her eldest brother's birthday, who, she says, is 'the only respectable one of the family, and that is because he has a liver complaint.' There were there, her brother Charles, and old Charles Sheridan, the uncle, and others. The only lady besides Mrs. Norton, her sister Mrs. Blackwood, also very handsome, and very Sheridanic. She told me she was nothing. 'You see, Georgie's the beauty, and Carry's the wit, and I ought to be the good one, but then I am not.' I must say I liked her exceedingly. . . . In the evening Mrs. Norton sang and acted, and did everything that was delightful.

In 1830 Lord Melbourne became Home Secretary. He and her father had been personal friends, being

about the same age, and very similar in tastes and ways of thought. For her grandfather, Melbourne had always had unbounded admiration, and at one time proposed to be his biographer. When, therefore, the Home Secretary received from Mrs. Norton a letter pleading, as the granddaughter of the illustrious man who had been the idol of Melbourne's party, that he would give her husband some appointment for which, as a member of the Bar, he might be fitted, it was only natural that, instead of writing, Melbourne should call at Storey's Gate to answer her appeal in person. And thus commenced an intimacy fateful to both parties. Mrs. Norton was at this time about twenty-two years of age, beautiful, witty, a society favourite, and well on her way to fame as a writer. Melbourne's age was fifty-one, and he was a Cabinet Minister. He had been brought up in the society of the Prince of Wales, and that brilliant Whig circle of which Fox and Sheridan were the political ornaments, and in which dissipation and intellectual refinement were so singularly combined. Morality at that time was in a low state. Drunkenness among the men was too common to be considered disgraceful, and even those who were considered sober men took their two or three bottles a day. Gambling was rampant,

and conversation was habitually interlarded with oaths. It is said that a friend once suggested to Melbourne that, by way of saving time, they should assume everything and everybody to be damned, and come to the point at once. But, says Earl Cowper, there was joined with this a high sense of personal honour, a very cultivated taste, a love of poetry and history, and a spirit of justice and generosity, which are, perhaps, not so conspicuous in these days of ostentatious sobriety and purity. In 1830 Melbourne had been a widower for three years, but for twenty years previously his life had been embittered, and even his credit with the world somewhat impaired, by endless quarrels and reconciliations with his eccentric, romantic, and profligate wife. He was a man of extraordinary charm, 'tall, strong, and of vigorous constitution, brilliantly handsome, even in old age,' says his relative, Earl Cowper, 'with a play of countenance to which none of the pictures or prints of him which exist do the smallest justice.' His domestic troubles had driven him for a long time to the seclusion of his library, with the result that his varied learning was the astonishment of those who knew him in later life. He was never at a loss for copious illustrations, amusing anecdotes, and happy quotations, and his richness of talk was

rendered more piquant by the beauty of his voice joined to the quaintness and oddity of his manners. It is by no means wonderful that a man of this stamp found in Mrs. Norton's society the sympathy which was impossible for him either at home or in the crowd; nor is it strange that she, for her part, soon came to regard the brilliant statesman, who had sat at the feet of her grandfather, and lived on intimate and affectionate terms with her father, as a valued friend of her own. But it is obvious that here were all the materials for a very pretty scandal.

As soon as opportunity offered, Mr. Norton was appointed a Divisional Magistrate of London, a post for which he professed himself to be grateful, without disguising the fact that he was hopeful of greater benefits to come. But he did not behave quite in the way to ensure future benefits. He was lazy and quarrelsome, would not attend punctually at his Court, and engaged in unseemly public disputes with his brother magistrates. Melbourne was loath to interfere in his official capacity, and instead wrote to the wife to dissuade her husband from any public exhibitions in the newspapers; adding on one occasion, 'Urge him gently to a little more activity in the morning. He might surely without



difficulty get there [to his Court] by twelve o'clock in the morning.' With two of his colleagues, Hardwicke, and Walker, author of *The Original*, he did manage to get on very well; so well, indeed, that he used to call the Bench a pleasant club, and when a vacancy occurred at Whitechapel, he seemed to think that he and Hardwicke ought to have a right to make the appointment: he 'must have an agreeable fellow to walk to and fro with,' he said. Meanwhile Mrs. Norton was indefatigable with her pen, despite her unremitting care for her children, and the exactions of society, which would insist that 'the three graces,' as she and her sisters were called, should appear everywhere. The greater portion of the family income appears to have been of her providing. She frequently sat up all night to do her writing, even when she had a young infant to nurse, and according to her own account she could sometimes earn as much as £1400 in a single year.

The Nortons entertained largely, not to say lavishly and extravagantly. Lord Ronald Gower reports a conversation with Lord Beaconsfield, shortly before the aged statesman's death, in which he recalled his early friendship with the Sheridan sisters, and the delightful dinners at Mrs. Norton's, when 'the wit and humour flowed more copiously

than the claret.' And from Mr. Torrens we learn that it was at Mrs. Norton's house that Lord Melbourne first met Disraeli, then known as the young author of *Vivian Grey*, and defeated parliamentary candidate for Wycombe. Melbourne was pleased with the other's vivacious description of his recent travels in the East, and they had some talk on political prospects. 'Well, now, tell me,' said the Home Secretary, 'what do you want to be?' And the quiet gravity with which the young budding politician answered: 'I want to be Prime Minister,' fairly took his breath away. However, he answered quite seriously: 'No chance of that in our time,' and went on to state that Lord Grey could be succeeded by no one who had not old blood, high rank, great fortune, and greater ability to back him. 'Stanley,' said he, 'will be the next Prime Minister'; and he advised Disraeli, as a young man of evident ability and enterprise, who might come into some port at last, to put all such foolish notions out of his head. Within a few months of that conversation, Melbourne himself was Prime Minister, and the other realised what then seemed his absurd aspiration, thirty-five years afterwards.

Mary Shelley was a congenial and sympathetic friend, with whom Mrs. Norton appears to have

become acquainted about this time. From a letter to her we learn something about a disastrous literary speculation. 'I find,' she writes, 'that I have been utterly cheated by the Mr. — who proposed to me to get up a magazine; he gave me a false cheque, and obtained from me a blank acceptance which he has filled up for £1000.' In 1835 she interested herself to help Mary Shelley in obtaining a Government pension for Godwin's widow. Her advice on the gentle art of petitioning is very characteristic.

As to petitioning, no one dislikes begging more than I do, especially when one begs for what seems mere justice; but I have long observed that though people will resist *claims* (however just) they like to do *favours*. Therefore, when I beg I am a crawling lizard, a humble toad, a brown snake in cold weather, or any other simile most feebly '*rampante*,' the reverse of '*rampant*,' which would be the natural attitude for petitioning—but which must never be assumed except in the poodle style, standing with one's paws bent to catch the bits of bread on one's nose. . . . Forgive my jesting, but Irish blood *will* dance!

Unfortunately, however, the domestic felicity of a household is not necessarily on a par with the brilliancy of its dinner-parties; and we find the original rift within the Norton lute rapidly widening. The husband, doubtless, soon discovered that

his beautiful wife had a particularly biting tongue; but his notions of repartee were of the primitive kind which find favour amongst those savage denizens of the slums who must have frequently appeared before him in the dock. They had been married but a few weeks when he first resorted to personal violence, and two months afterwards he replied to some (admittedly uncivil) retort of hers with a brutal kick, the effects of which she felt for some time after. At the same time he was continually urging on her that, as she had brought him no fortune, it was her wifely duty to use every effort with the political friends of her grandfather to get him more lucrative promotion in his profession. And, not content with this, he himself worried and wearied Lord Melbourne with repeated demands for a better appointment, and even attempted to borrow a sum of £1500 from him. In 1833 his wife left him on the occasion of some exceptional violence, but, for the sake of the children, she was induced to return. Disappointment of further benefits from his wife's connections seems to have made Mr. Norton first angry and then insanely jealous. When, at length, he set detective inquiries on foot as to her conduct, she consulted, as to her course of action, with Sir James Graham, who was a relative of hers,

with Colonel Leicester Stanhope, and with Lord Melbourne. They all reprobated Mr. Norton's conduct, but Melbourne wrote counselling forbearance and peace. A woman, he said, should never part with her husband whilst she can possibly remain with him, and this sound general rule was of particular application in the case of a young, handsome woman, of lively imagination, fond of company and conversation, as Mrs. Norton was. He wrote thus, with a good deal more to the same effect, before he had any notion that, Mr. Norton's inquiries in other directions having ended in nothing, a case was in process of being made against himself. This happened in 1835, when he was Prime Minister, and he, of course, lost no time in putting himself into the professional hands of the Attorney-General, who, with Serjeant Talfourd and Mr. Thesiger, undertook his defence. At the same time he wrote to her :—

I hope you will not take it ill if I implore you to try at least to be calm under these trials. You know that what is alleged (if it be alleged) is utterly false, and what is false can rarely be made to appear true. The steps which it will be prudent to take it will be impossible to determine until we know more certainly the course that it is intended to pursue.

Greville tells us that there was great talk about

the affair, and that, thinking 'our off-hand Premier' would find himself in a ticklish position, he asked the Duke of Wellington whether Melbourne would resign. 'O Lord, no!' said the Duke. 'Resign? Not a bit of it. I tell you all these things are a nine-days' wonder; it can't come into court before Parliament is up. People will have done talking of it before that happens; it will all blow over, and won't signify a straw.' Melbourne, however, felt differently, and told the King he was quite willing to resign, but William IV. assured him that he paid no regard to the pending accusation.

The trial came on in June 1836. The witnesses were chiefly discarded servants, of damaged character, and even these could not swear to anything during the past three years. Sundry newspapers, in a way with which we are sufficiently familiar, had excited public expectation with respect to the sensational character of the correspondence which it was alleged Mr. Norton had discovered in his wife's desk. But all that could be produced in court were the three following short notes:—

1. I will call about half-past four. Yours,

MELBOURNE.

2. How are you? I shall not be able to come to-day. I shall to-morrow.

3. No house to-day. I will call after the levée. If you wish it later, let me know. I will then explain about going to Vauxhall. Yours,

MELBOURNE.

Sir William Follett was reduced to the argument that, because these hurried notes did not begin and end with the formal 'My dear Mrs. Norton,' therefore they were evidence of a great and unwarrantable degree of affection. About this time Charles Dickens was writing his *Pickwick Papers*, and the stress laid on this correspondence gave him a hint for the letters in the immortal *Bardell v. Pickwick* breach of promise suit, and for the comments of Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz thereupon. Lord Campbell says that the Norton trial excited more general interest than any other since the beginning of the century, with the exception of the trial of Queen Caroline; and when the jury returned a verdict of acquittal, the loud cheers, which could not be suppressed in court, were taken up and echoed by the crowds waiting in the streets outside. There was a general wonder that, having so poor a case, Norton ever ventured to take it into court. Melbourne was of opinion that it was a pecuniary speculation, either for hush-money or for damages. Greville tells us that it was altogether a disreput-

able political move, and says: 'There can be no doubt old Wynford was at the bottom of it all, and persuaded Lord Grantley to urge it on for mere political purposes.' Shortly after the trial, he made the following note in his diary:—

Fletcher Norton, who was examined on the trial, is staying in town with a Mr. Lowe, a Nottinghamshire parson, and Denison, who is Norton's neighbour, called on him the other day. Denison talked to Lowe, who told him that Fletcher Norton had shown him the case on which they were going to proceed, and that he told him he thought it was a very weak one, to which he had replied so did he, but he believed they expected it would produce a very important *political* effect.

If the desired object was to discredit Melbourne in the eyes of the young girl who was about to succeed to the throne, the move signally failed of its effect. On the accession of the Queen, in the following year, Lord Melbourne certainly found himself placed in a most trying, delicate, and responsible position; but he rose to the occasion. He was the instructor of the Queen, and as Mr. Gladstone said, 'The high performance of the pupil has always been believed to reflect the loyalty, the capacity, the judgment, and the tact, of the instructor.' Greville says that his loyal devotion soon

warmed into a paternal affection, which the Queen repaid by unbounded manifestations of confidence and regard.

Some years later, when Mrs. Norton applied for the custody of her children, the whole story was revived against her, and Lord Melbourne was asked to swear an affidavit in support of her application. 'The story about me,' said he, in his characteristic manner, 'was all a d——d lie, you know. Put that in proper form, and I'll swear it.' And, to complete this part of the story, it may be here mentioned that, according to a statement in Greville's *Diary*, when Lord Melbourne died, in 1845, he left a letter for Lord Beauvale containing a 'solemn declaration that what he had instructed the Attorney-General to say on the trial as to her purity was true. He said that, as his indiscretion had exposed her to obloquy and suspicion, he was bound to renew this declaration.'

What led to the Nortons' final quarrel and separation, however, was not suspicion or conjugal jealousy, but Mr. Norton's violent resentment of what he chose to take as an insult from his wife's family. A great gathering of relatives had been arranged at Mr. Sheridan's seat, Frampton, in Wiltshire, to which she and the children had been

invited without him. On the morning arranged for her departure, he suddenly packed off the children, in charge of a servant, to Lord Grantley's place in the country, and told his wife that she might go to her relatives alone. He then instructed his servants that, when Mrs. Norton returned to the house at Storey's Gate, she was not to be admitted, but they were to answer her inquiries at the door with the chain up. A long and angry correspondence followed. Conditions were offered and rejected, retractations asked for, on either side, and refused. Then, for some unexplained reason, Mr. Norton suddenly became eager for a reconciliation. He wrote notes almost daily, beginning 'My dear Carry,' or 'My Carry,' and ending 'Yours affectionately.' He suggested, we may suppose by way of joke, that she should meet him to talk over matters in an empty house in Berkeley Square, where he proposed to wait for her, but as he signed the letter 'Greenacre,' which was the name of a notorious murderer of the time, she not unnaturally insisted that their meeting should be in his own house. They met; he humbled himself, and she agreed to return to him. But something quickly gave him fresh offence; the negotiations were broken off, and on the appropriate date of the

1st of April 1836, he published an insulting advertisement in the papers proclaiming that she had left his house, and that he would not be responsible for her debts. After the trial, he notified her that her own family might keep her, or she might write for her bread, and as for the children, they were by law at his disposal, and he intended to keep them away from her. Further negotiations finally resulted in an agreement by which she was to be allowed £500 a year, and have permission to see her children occasionally, at her brother's house, for half an hour at a time, in the presence of two witnesses.

In her battle with the world, however, Mrs. Norton was not without staunch and devoted friends, prominent amongst whom were Lord Lansdowne and the Duchess of Sutherland. The former she gratefully refers to in after years as the

Friend of old days, of suffering, storm, and strife,  
 Patient and kind through many a wild appeal,  
 In the arena of thy busy life  
 Never too busy or too cold to feel.

And to the latter she dedicates one of her books in some impassioned verses, certainly not unworthy of the great poet to whom she has frequently been compared—

Thou, then, when cowards lied away my name,  
 And scoffed to see me feebly stem the tide;  
 When some were kind on whom I had no claim,  
 And some forsook on whom my love relied,  
 And some, who might have battled for my sake,  
 Stood off in doubt to see what turn the world would take—

Thou gav'st me that the poor do give the poor,  
 Kind words, and holy wishes, and true tears;  
 The loved, the near of kin, could do no more,  
 Who changed not with the gloom of varying years,  
 But clung the closer when I stood forlorn,  
 And blunted Slander's dart with their indignant scorn.

For they who credit crime, are they who feel  
 Their own hearts weak to unresisted sin;  
 Memory, not judgment, prompts the thoughts which steal  
 O'er minds like these, an easy faith to win;  
 And tales of broken truth are still believed  
 Most readily by those who have themselves deceived.

But like a white swan down a troubled stream,  
 Whose ruffling pinion hath the power to fling  
 Aside the turbid drops which darkly gleam,  
 And mar the freshness of her snowy wing—  
 So thou, with queenly grace and gentle pride,  
 Along the world's dark waves in purity dost glide:

Thy pale and pearly cheek was never made  
 To crimson with a faint false-hearted shame;  
 Thou didst not shrink—of bitter tongues afraid,  
 Who hunt in packs the object of their blame;  
 For thee the sad denial still held true,  
 For from thy own good thoughts thy heart its mercy drew.

In the December following the trial, Abraham Hayward describes her as looking very pale and thin; but she had already bravely set to work to 'write for her bread.' In the course of the year she had written a drama founded on the story of Beckford's *Vathek*; but Bunn was obliged to decline bringing it out at Dury Lane, on account, he said, of its necessitating a rapid succession of scenic effects such as would puzzle any scene-painters and mechanists of those days to follow. She contributed largely to the various 'Annuals,' 'Keepsakes,' and 'Books of Beauty,' which were so fashionable from about 1823 to 1850. And in 1840 appeared her *Dream*, and other poems (from which the foregoing verses to the Duchess of Sutherland are quoted), a volume which greatly added to her reputation, and impelled Lockhart, in the *Quarterly*, to describe her as the Byron of our poetesses. It must have been about this time that Fanny Kemble met with her again, while she was living with her uncle, Charles Sheridan, and 'still maintaining her glorious supremacy of beauty and wit in the great London world.' The Kembles were at dinner at her house on one occasion, between 1841 and 1843, when among those present were Lord Lansdowne and Lord Normanby, both then in the Ministry, and

pecially invited to this dinner for the purpose of getting their goodwill and influence on behalf of 'a certain shy, silent, rather rustic gentleman from the far-away province of New Brunswick.' This *protégé* was Mr. Cunard, afterwards Sir Samuel Cunard, Bart., who had come to London—an obscure and humble individual—to endeavour to get from the Government the sole privilege of carrying the trans-Atlantic mails on his line of steamers. A little later on, we get this picture of her appearance:—

She had a rich gold-coloured silk on, shaded and softened all over with black lace draperies, and her splendid head, neck, and arms were adorned with magnificently simple Etruscan gold ornaments, which she had brought from Rome, whence she had just returned, and where the fashion of that antique jewellery had lately been revived. She was still *une beauté triomphante à faire voir aux ambassadeurs*.

In 1845 she published *The Child of the Islands*, a poem intended to draw the attention of the Prince of Wales (then an infant four years old) to the condition of the people of this country, with a view of bridging the gulf between rich and poor. She had previously treated this and similar themes both in letters to the *Times* and in her *Voice from the Factories*, published in 1836; but poetry and pamphleteering do not yoke well together, and whatever

she had to say on this kind of subject had better have been said in prose. At Christmas 1846 she issued a couple of poetical fairy-tales, entitled *Aunt Carry's Ballads for Children*, which are written in a graceful and charming style, and became fairly popular. In 1851 she produced the first of her chief novels, *Stuart of Dunleath*, a somewhat sombre 'story of modern times,' too plainly coloured by her own bitter experiences. We find occasional mentions of her, together with a few of her letters, in the *Hayward Correspondence*. In 1841 she sends a bright letter from Cowes, in which, amongst other charming banter, she asks her 'Dear Avocat':—

*Do you believe shrimps are happy? Great naturalists attribute their incessant skippings to the vulgar mode of expressing rapture commonly called 'jumping for joy,' but the new school of philosophy will rather have it that they are out of breath, and trying to reach the water! On which side are you?*

However it might be with shrimps, there seemed little but unhappiness in store for her. Although Mr. Norton had retained all of her property that he could lay hands on, gifts, books, and other articles bought by herself from her literary earnings, besides the interest of her portion bequeathed by her father, which, according to the law as it then stood, the

trustees were compelled to pay to him, he nevertheless refused for three years to pay her the £500 per annum agreed upon by deed. Tradesmen to whom she owed money for household expenses accordingly sued him in 1853 for their accounts, whereupon he not only subpœnaed her publishers and demanded an account of her profits, but demurred that, in consequence of certain technical informalities, the deed by which he had agreed to make her an allowance was invalid. He appeared in the County Court in person, and with the aid of a solicitor, endeavoured to excite prejudice against her by raking up the story of the scandal which had been disposed of seventeen years previously. She went abroad for a time ; and we find her writing to Hayward soon afterwards from Paris, 'I have nothing here except the sort of dark security from trouble that a mole has who is underground.' But she turned fiercely on her persecutor, and in a pamphlet on *English Laws for Women in the 19th Century* in 1854, and a *Letter to the Queen* in 1855, she told the whole story of her wrongs, and made an eloquent and impassioned plea for an alteration of the existing law. It is said that the hardship of her case, the pamphlets just enumerated, and her subsequent untiring exertions in the cause, materially helped to

bring about the better state of things which exists to-day.

In 1856 Hayward asked her for some information about Samuel Rogers for the article on the banker-poet which he was preparing for the *Edinburgh Review*. She willingly complied, and supplied him with both reminiscence and characterisation.

His God was Harmony [she writes], and over his life Harmony presided, sitting on a lukewarm cloud. He was *not* the 'poet, sage, and philosopher' people expect to find he was, but a man in whom the tastes (rare fact!) predominated over the passions; who defrayed the expenses of his tastes as other men make outlay for the gratification of their passions. . . . He did nothing rash. I am sure Rogers as a baby never fell down *unless he was pushed*, but walked from chair to chair of the drawing-room furniture steadily and quietly till he reached the place where the sunbeam fell on the carpet. He must always have preferred a lullaby to the merriest game of romps; and if he could have spoken would have begged his long-clothes might be made of fine *Mull* muslin instead of cambric or jacquenet, the first fabric being of incomparable softness, and the two latter capable of that which he loathed, *Starch*.

She contrasts Rogers, pointing out the beauties of his beloved pictures with slow, white finger to breakfasting friends, with the modern man who, whenever he buys a picture, seems possessed with a burning desire to prove it is a Raphael to his yelping

enemies. And she afterwards adds a very personal anecdote :—

I remember (alas !) telling Rogers if he would write for my *then* magazine I would 'do anything for him.' 'Will you kiss me?' 'Yes.' 'But how?' 'Cheerfully.'—He may have told the story, but he certainly *resented* the speech, and showed very often that he remembered it.

She was in Edinburgh in 1859, and wrote Hayward a comical account of the Burns Centenary. She missed the Ayr dinner, she says, through catching a cold while walking in the wind and rain in petticoats as short as Tam-o'-Shanter's witch's sark ! The Centenary celebration seemed to her a very quiet and humdrum affair.

Even the enthusiasm of the Scotch is *frappé à la glace*. It is a new acquaintance, and they don't feel familiar enough with it to be jolly—and think of three thousand sitting down to *Temperance-tea-trays* !! I'd as lief be a duck and sit in a pond with my chin upon duckweed.

During the latter part of her life, Mrs. Norton lived chiefly in London, at 3 Chesterfield Street, Mayfair, mixing freely in society, and continuing her literary work to the end. *The Lady of La Garaye*, her best-known poem, was published in 1862; in the following year appeared a novel entitled *Lost and Saved*, and in 1867, what is per-

haps to the present generation her best-known novel, *Old Sir Douglas*. Once more we must draw upon Fanny Kemble's *Records* :—

My last vision of her [she says] was during one of my last sojourns in London, when I saw her at Lansdowne House, wandering through the rooms on the arm of her youngest son, her glorious head still crowned with its splendid braids of hair, and wreathed with grapes and ivy leaves. In the autumn of 1870 Lady C—— reports meeting her in London society, now indeed quite old, but indomitably handsome and witty.

At last, in 1875, George Norton died ; but the long delayed freedom came too late. In March 1877 she was married to Sir William Stirling Maxwell of Keir, author of *The Cloister Life of Charles V.* and other well-known books ; a man, says Lord Dufferin, as modest and lovable as he was learned and accomplished. But she died before the year was out, and a few months later he followed her.

'Diana of the Crossways,' it will be remembered, is a great beauty and a great wit, who makes an early and inexplicable marriage. Before long her friends hear rumours of dissensions, and suggestions of money troubles. Lord Dannisburgh, a Cabinet Minister, who is one of her many admirers, and a

frequent guest at her house, gives her husband a colonial appointment. 'The moral repute of the great Whig lord and the beauty of the lady composed inflammable material.' The world wags its tongue, and at last the slumbering jealousy of the husband breaks out in a legal process. He fails to secure a verdict in his divorce action. Diana takes to literature, writes several successful books, gives choice and brilliant dinner-parties, loves, and is loved by, a rising young statesman, and is only accidentally prevented from running away with him. Later on, he tells her one night an important Cabinet secret, which she instantly sells to the editor of an Opposition paper, with the result that the young statesman discards her, and incontinently marries some one else. A few years after their separation her disagreeable husband conveniently dies of heart-disease, and after some further tribulation and discipline Diana is wedded to the hero who has been patiently waiting for her from the commencement of the story. The parallel between the two lives is unmistakable, but the necessity for that preliminary caution to read *Diana of the Crossways* as fiction is equally apparent. The novelist adapts, and whatever does not suit his purpose is rejected. There is, however, one point on which the reader should be put beyond any

risk of misconception. The plot, if plot it can be called, of Mr. Meredith's brilliant and fascinating story hinges upon Diana's betrayal of the Cabinet secret confided to her by her young statesman lover. This appears to be a gratuitous blot on the character of the heroine of the book which most readers will feel that no tears of pity can ever wash out. It is founded on a story that Mrs. Norton betrayed to Barnes, editor of the *Times*, the secret, confided to her by Sidney Herbert, one of her ardent admirers, that Sir Robert Peel and his Cabinet had resolved upon a repeal of the Corn Laws. The secret certainly did leak out, and caused a serious Government crisis; but the story that Mrs. Norton was the culprit appears to have no foundation whatever.

Lord Dufferin laments that the art of their generation was so bad as rather to belie than to preserve the beauty of Tom Sheridan's children. But that the real 'Diana' was an incomparable beauty is proved by abundant testimony. She is described as a brunette, with dark, burning eyes, like her grandfather's, a pure Greek profile, and a clear olive complexion. Mary Somerville relates that she asked Gibson, the sculptor, what he thought of Englishwomen, and he replied that he had seen many handsome women, but never one

so lovely as Mrs. Norton. Her wit must also be accepted on testimony, for little or nothing of it has been handed down to us; though even if it had, as George Meredith says, 'Drolleries, humours, reputed witticisms, are like odours of roast meats, past with the picking of the joint.' The talk at her dinner-table, as at Diana Warwick's, would doubtless be on high levels and on low, 'now a story; a question opening new routes; sharp sketches of known personages; a paradox shot by laughter as soon as uttered'; and her guests would equally have risen from table with the satisfaction of knowing that they had not argued, had not wrangled, and had never stagnated. A record of such evenings is an impossibility; but in *Diana of the Crossways*, an imaginative artist has re-created them for us.





By Permission of Mr John Murray.

*Elizabeth Eastlake.*  
*From the painting by Sir W<sup>m</sup> Boxall, R.A.*

## A TORY LADY OF THE LAST GENERATION

LADY EASTLAKE presents several points of contrast with her friend Mrs. Grote, who was for half a lifetime the object of her admiration and devotion. They were both greatly interested in politics and in art; but with Mrs. Grote the science of politics was paramount and art only subsidiary; while with Lady Eastlake politics was the subsidiary and art the principal interest of life. Mrs. Grote was a Philosophical Radical; Lady Eastlake a traditional Tory. Mrs. Grote was highly unconventional in behaviour, and in opinion Utilitarian, if not positively anti-theological; Lady Eastlake was somewhat proper and punctilious, a *grande dame* in Society, and an unostentatious but perfectly orthodox churchwoman. Mrs. Grote had the more powerful, original, and masculine mind, with a wider range of intellectual interests; though she wrote little; and even the little she did write gave but a faint indication of her extraordinary powers. Lady Eastlake, on the other hand, had

a literary gift which enabled her to make the most of her otherwise more limited endowment; and, though keeping strictly to the more beaten paths, in thought as well as in behaviour, she for nearly half a century exerted a considerable influence on public opinion as a regular contributor to the *Quarterly Review*. It is no mean testimonial to the high character and sterling worth of both these extremely clever women that, for a period of twenty-three years, they preserved, without break or cloud, an intimate and affectionate friendship; each uncompromisingly maintaining her own views and line of conduct, and yet, 'except in opinion, not disagreeing.'

The lot of the lady who afterwards became the wife of a President of the Royal Academy, and herself second only to her husband as the most cultured and competent judge of art in her time, was from the first cast in pleasant places. Elizabeth, fifth child and fourth daughter of Dr. Edward Rigby, a physician of large practice, was born in Norwich on November 17, 1809. Dr. Rigby provided his daughters with good masters for the usual subjects of a lady's education; and all his children had the additional advantage of being allowed to mix freely with the visitors, some of

them men of distinction, who frequented his house. Elizabeth is described as a clever and amusing child, who began to draw at the age of eight, and was even then, by her mother's account, 'very ambitious.' After the doctor's death in 1821, Mrs. Rigby went to live on an estate she possessed at Framingham; and six years later took the whole of her family to Heidelberg for a period of two years, during which time Elizabeth added German to her list of languages, and also became a very accomplished musician. In 1830, at the age of nineteen, she made her first appearance as an authoress, with a story entitled *My Aunt in a Salt Mine*, which appeared in *Fraser's Magazine*. In 1832 she spent most of the year in London for the purpose of studying literature and art in the British Museum and the National Gallery. In 1836, after another visit to Germany, she contributed a hostile article on Goethe to the *Foreign Quarterly Review*. From 1838 to 1840 she stayed with a married sister at Reval in Russia, and while there constantly wrote home long and interesting letters to her mother. Her descriptions of the bright, cold, clear, spotless country around Reval; of her sledging journeys, and encounters with wolves; of the antiquities, architecture, and

pictures in the towns she visited ; of the manners, customs, and superstitions of the country-people ; of the life of the nobility ; of the fêtes and masked balls in St. Petersburg, and other matters, formed, when collected together, so striking a picture of the then unfamiliar Russian world that John Murray gladly gave her £100 for the copyright ; and when the book appeared, in two volumes, in 1841, it was well received, and launched her successfully on a literary career. Her own ambition was still to be an artist. Many years later she said, ‘My pen has never been a favourite implement with me ; the pencil is the child of my heart.’ But when, in 1841, some of the sketches she had made in Russia were shown to Lockhart, he pronounced strongly for literature instead of art—‘Pen against pencil, £1000 to an orange, say I,’ was his rather queer way of putting it—and as he backed up his opinion by promptly inviting her to become a contributor to the *Quarterly Review*, she perhaps wisely, though certainly somewhat regretfully, took his advice.

Her first article in the *Quarterly* (on a Russian subject) appeared in March 1842 ; and from that date until within two years of her death she remained a constant and valued contributor.

You seem to have it in your power [wrote Lockhart in 1843] to render the *Q.R.* an instrument of great improvement among classes of readers that have hitherto probably given no attention to its contents. You are the only lady, I believe, that ever wrote in it, except Mrs. Somerville, who once gave us a short scientific article; and I had long felt and regretted the want of that knowledge of women and their concerns which men can never attain, for the handling of numberless questions most interesting and most important to society.

As a matter of fact, however, she did not usually write on subjects of a specifically feminine nature. The foregoing remarks themselves were apropos of an article on 'Evangelical Novels,' a subject which surely might have been equally well treated by a mere man; and there are not more than four articles out of the thirty-five which she contributed in the course of fifty years which would seem to be peculiarly appropriate for feminine handling. And, in any case, neither editor nor contributor proposed that the public should see any evidence of the feminine hand; on the contrary, some trouble is occasionally taken to indicate that the writer is none other than a man. In her review of *Jane Eyre*, which caused some little commotion in 1848, when discussing the vexed question of the male or female authorship of that book, she writes that 'no woman—a lady friend, whom we

are always happy to consult, assures us—makes mistakes in her own *métier*.' And in an ingenious and entertaining article on 'The Art of Dress,' in 1847, after enumerating all the excesses or caprices of dress which have appeared on the beautiful person of woman, and alleging that as bad or worse have been exhibited on the ugly body of man, the masculinity of the writer of the article is again and again insisted upon in such expressions as—'We have had the same effeminate stuffs, the same fine laces, the same rich furs, the same costly jewels. We have had as much gold and embroidery, and more tinsel and trumpery. We have worn long hair, and large sleeves, and tight waists'—and so forth throughout the whole catalogue. This was followed up by a denunciation of the then fashionable male costume as a mysterious combination of the inconvenient and the picturesque—a description which was true enough, but which gained additional effect from being supposed to be the daring utterance of a male rebel against the prevailing sartorial tyranny.

Each [article of clothing] taken separately is as absurd as the emptiest fop could have devised, and as ugly as the staunchest Puritan could have desired. The hat is a machine to which an impartial stranger might impute a variety of

useful culinary purposes, but would never dream of putting on his head. His stock looks like a manicle [*sic*] with which he has escaped from prison, or his cravat like a lasso, with which he has been caught in the act. His shirt-collars may be entitled to their name of *Vatermörder* (or father-murderers) in Germany, but certainly never did any other execution there or elsewhere. His coat is a contrivance which covers only half his person, and does not fit that; while his waistcoat, if a strait one, would be an excellent restraint for one who can contentedly wear the rest of the costume. Each article, in addition, being under such strict laws that whoever attempts to alter or embellish, only gets credit for more vanity than his fellows, and not for more taste.

In this instance, however, the disguise was not sufficiently complete, for one male critic at least (the genial Dean Ramsay) pointed out that the account of a 'quilling which scratches her and everybody else' could only have been written by the wearer of similar articles; and that the foregoing description of male dress, stopping like that of Miss Grizel Oldbuck of Monkbarns at 'that part o' his garments whilk it doesna become a leddy to particulareeze,' must have been the production of a female hand. The Dean, if he had not been so extremely gallant a gentleman, might also have pointed to a delicious specimen of what is sometimes designated female logic, in the introductory paragraph of the article, wherein the author says:—

Every age has its favourite fallacy suited to the favourite foible of the period, which is passed eagerly from mouth to mouth, till some one comes who can afford to detect it. Thus for centuries it suited *us* to circulate a well-turned set of fallacies respecting woman's incapacity for keeping a secret—the motive being merely thereby to secure an innocent scape-goat on whom to lay the shame of our own indiscretions. Now, we are only too happy when one of the sex will condescend to become the confidante of any secrets we may possess.

Why? Because, as a logical reader would naturally, after this, expect to be told, we now know that a woman *can* keep a secret? Not at all: but because we now feel that our secrets are 'honoured by her acceptance, *whether she keeps them or no* '!

In 1842 Mrs. Rigby sold her Norfolk estate and migrated to Edinburgh. Elizabeth was then thirty-three years of age, and was 'a strikingly handsome, imperial-looking woman,' with a magnificent figure, and only one inch under six feet in height. She seems to have been particularly proud of her stature, and there are frequent references to it in her letters. On one occasion, in Paris, in August 1855, when she was waiting with the crowd on the Boulevards to see Queen Victoria pass, she relates that, from time to time, whenever there was a report

that the Queen was coming, the people stood on their chairs, in order to see over the soldiers' heads, and as often as they did so an odious gendarme came along and insisted upon everybody getting down.

After screaming '*Descendez ! Descendez !*' to all around us, he turned like a tiger to me and said, '*Et vous aussi, Madame ; mais descendez, je vous dis.*' This enchanted the crowd, for all the time I stood only on the ground, not having mounted anything, and the laughter never ceased :—'*Il veut couper les jambes à Madame. Madame n'a pas besoin d'une chaise. Je voudrais être grande comme Madame,*' and so forth.

Seeing that, in addition to these physical advantages, she possessed great conversational powers, and an already established fame as an authoress, it is not surprising that she speedily became a great favourite in the literary society of the northern capital. And she, on her part, found that society very fascinating ; the perfect ease, spirited conversation, ample board, and hearty welcome, making altogether, as she said, a delightful whole. Her letters and journals are full of bright little sketches of the various notabilities with whom she came into contact. The great Christopher North, who at first sight only appeared to be 'a remarkable-looking man, and would be venerable if his hair were within bounds,'

is seen on nearer acquaintance to be the very personification of genius, 'never knowing apparently what is the next word he is to say, and yet always saying the best.' Lord Jeffrey is 'sharp as a needle and fresh as a rose, the youngest man of seventy I ever saw'; always 'the soul of good company, kind, affable, and buoyant in his manner, with the neatest little person in the world'; possessing 'splendid eyes, of which he well knows the use, and great play of face'; but with 'rather a finiking way of talking, with incessant French words not too well pronounced.' Concerning Lockhart she writes at some length :—

It is seldom one sees so genuine a literary character. . . . He is everything but a man of science. He will give you the etymology of a word, the date of a battle, the history of an obscure Russian poet, an anecdote of the Queen, and a quotation from Tacitus, all in a breath, and be right in everything. . . . There never was a face with so little of the animal in it; the features, too, spiritualised—one hardly knows whether most sharpened by care or refined by intellect. . . . Great contrasts of expression—excessive sourness and ineffable sweetness. . . . A man sought by everybody, pleasing few, and caring for fewer.

Lockhart evidently made a very strong impression on her; and so apparently did she on him, for in 1843 he wrote to Wilson: 'I hear you are in love

with E. Rigby, and she with you, of course. All right—she is a good one, and bright too'; and in 1849, when the state of his health prevented him from going much into the world, a rumour was current that he had been blighted by the marriage of Miss Rigby to Mr. Eastlake. Lockhart's biographer treats this as an idle tale; but a more than ordinary admiration must have been known to exist for such a tale to obtain currency. Some few of the Edinburgh notabilities were not to her liking. We hear of a visit to 'Mr. Guthrie's conventicle,' and are told that the great preacher was a mere O'Connell of the pulpit—a mere agitator, cringing to the people instead of admonishing them. And George Combe, 'the phrenology man,' who one day sat next her at dinner, is rather mordantly described as 'a tall, Puritanical, dissenter-looking person, with a good forehead, in attestation of his intellect, and a hard face, in betrayal of his morals.' But there were few flies in the ointment; and to the end of her days she looked back on these seven years in Edinburgh as among the pleasantest of her life.

In 1844 she came up to London, and spent three months with her friends the Murrays in Albemarle Street; where, of course, she made acquaintance with most of the stars in the literary firmament, and

lightly sketched them off for the benefit of her mother in Edinburgh. One day she writes:—

Mr. Carlyle called, bringing with him his wife—certainly a more refined half; but he is an honest, true man, a character such as he himself can alone describe. He is a kind of Burns in appearance—the head of a thinker, the eye of a lover, and the mouth of a peasant. His colours, too, seem to have been painted on his high cheek-bones at the plough's tail. He spoke broad Scotch, but his intonation was measured and musical, and his words came out sing-song, as if he were repeating them by heart.

A few days later, she went to the Carlyles' house in the evening, when Mrs. Carlyle interested her as being lively, clever, and 'evidently very happy'! Miss Strickland, though 'a very sweet-looking person, with a lovely throat and bust, and a gown fitting as well as all well-made women's gowns do,' is at the same time pronounced to be 'the perfection of blues,' seeming to regard it as the most fortunate thing in life to 'get a name,' and 'evidently thought herself *the* historian of the age.' Turner, the artist, was one day among the company to dinner, and appeared to her to be 'a queer little being, very knowing about all the castles he has drawn—a cynical kind of body, who seems to love his art for no other reason than because it is his own.' Not

that she means to depreciate Turner's art; for, after looking at his views on the Seine, she declares that he does much as he likes with his brush, and if his likings are sometimes beyond our comprehension, that is perhaps our fault.' But when Sir E. L. Bulwer takes her in to dinner one day, both the man and his art are summed up in one condemnatory sentence—'a man with rather disagreeable manners, reminding me of some of the sub-heroes in his own books.' Her friends took her to St. Paul's to hear Sydney Smith preach; and she heard, she says, a sermon which sounded like a paper from the *Spectator*, 'terse, compact, sometimes swelling into poetry, sometimes warming into humour; one that every creature, high and low, could understand, but none be improved by. . . . He himself looks, at first sight, an old pampered priest, but, at second, like the shrewd observer; one half of his face the stern moralist, the other the dry humorist.'

Amongst the many literary, scientific, and artistic notabilities whom Miss Rigby met while on this visit to the Murrays was Mr. Charles Lock Eastlake, R.A., whose frescoes in Buckingham Palace caused her to designate him 'the Raphael of England,' and whose gentle, refined manners, and cultivated conversation won her highest admiration.

After a time they became engaged; and in 1849 they were married. In one of her note-books she had written, some ten years previously, 'Let my husband be faithful, good-tempered, and punctual, and I'll ask for little more. The wisdom of Solomon won't console you when you are waiting for dinner, and feel that you may wait for all the man cares.' Whether Eastlake fulfilled her requirements in these respects is not on record; but otherwise he must certainly have been the very ideal husband for her. At the time of her marriage she was a beautiful and highly cultivated woman of forty, with a considerable literary reputation, already possessed of a knowledge of art such as few ladies have ever attained, and with the disposition and gifts which enabled her to hold her own in fashionable society. He was a painter of high rank, if not quite the English Raphael of her imagination, about ten years her senior, and a man not only of fine presence and urbane manners, accustomed from his youth up to high society, but also of rare scholarship, and with an intimate acquaintance with all forms of art, ancient and modern, unparalleled at that time in England. He had been generally regarded as wedded to his art; and Samuel Rogers took an early opportunity to assure the bride that 'no event,

no great earthquake, no French Revolution, nothing could have astonished all Europe more than Eastlake's marriage.' Within another year Eastlake was elected President of the Royal Academy; and his lady found herself very much in her element at the grand receptions of Lansdowne, Grosvenor, or Devonshire Houses, and in mixing, as the President's wife, with all who were distinguished for literature or science or art in London society. For sixteen years from the date of her marriage she wrote regularly to her mother and sister a letter of at least six pages three times a week; and although the earlier ones are not much more than a catalogue of well-known names, we find after a time a return to the bright little pen-and-ink portraits which made her Edinburgh letters so interesting. Lord George Manners, for instance, is aptly hit off as 'looking like an old English gentleman by Gainsborough'; Charles Kingsley appears as 'a thin, pale man, who stammers.' Or the great Duke of Wellington, as seen at the private view of the Royal Academy in 1850, is discovered to be really very different-looking to the then (and still) popular idea of him.

We stopped to speak to the Duke of Wellington, whose plump and delicate-tinted face little corresponded with my

hatchet notions of him. Age and peace have certainly softened his features and expression, and the white hair softens the hooked nose: he is stouter, too. He makes the military salute every minute, and answers with his two fingers up to his head as an affirmative. It would be an affectation if he were not the Duke of Wellington.

In 1852 Lady Eastlake for the first time accompanied her husband on his continental tour in search of pictures—a trip which they made annually together (with only two exceptions) from 1854, when he was made Director of the National Gallery, until his death. No fatigues or discomforts ever deterred him, she says, from visiting the remotest parts of Italy, wherever there was any prospect of securing (and in most cases it was also rescuing) a work of interest. And wherever he went she went too; taking copious notes of pictures, sketching with much industry and undeniable talent in every place, and writing home voluminous letters containing a full account of all they had done and everything they had seen. It was a time of revived interest in art; but popular ideas on the subject were in a rather hazy condition. She relates how one day, in the new ballroom at Buckingham Palace, a gentleman of high standing lamented to her husband that better artists had not been employed to design the

twenty-four Hours—female figures on a dark blue ground, which went round the walls—and that Sir Charles, after patiently hearing him out, quietly remarked, ‘It may be a great pity, as you say, for the designs are only Raphael’s.’ But, fortunately, the new Director had gained the entire confidence of Prince Albert and Sir Robert Peel, and, being given a free hand, was able to purchase something like one hundred and forty notable pictures for the nation, and to raise the English National Gallery to a high rank among the picture-galleries of Europe. In her article on Giovanni Morelli, which she wrote for the *Quarterly Review* two years before her death, Lady Eastlake enumerates some of the difficulties to be overcome, and some of the qualifications necessary for carrying out, such a task as had been undertaken by her husband.

What is technically called ‘connoisseurship’ requires a wide range of intellectual qualifications; something of the astuteness of the lawyer, the accurate power of diagnosis of the physician, and the research of the antiquary and historian; all summed up in an art which most of us are practising every day, more or less consciously—the art of comparison. Connoisseurship is a modern profession, because a modern necessity. It has been developed too late to save many a priceless work; but not too late to identify those which remain. In the times of what are called the Old Masters

little was written about them individually. Their works were left to speak and shift for themselves, and that, with small exception, they have continued to do till a comparatively late period. The consequences might have been anticipated: landmarks have been effaced; schools confused; names mistaken and misplaced; the authorship of nine-tenths of the works which have descended to us has been lost, or has passed through an ignorant and vainglorious period, which distributed to them the names supposed either to do them most honour, or to attract most gain to their owners.

As for herself, she found, she said, the appetite for seeing pictures *vient en voyant*; and of course she could scarcely help acquiring a vastly increased knowledge of the subject by thus constantly travelling with her husband. It greatly amused her when some who were pompously eager to teach him when they entered a house or gallery humbly asked his opinion before they came away; and he seldom left a collection of any kind without having cleared up some doubtful masters for the owners. 'The way in which he smashes a false name is sometimes very amusing,' she writes; and no doubt it was so to her; though probably the disillusioned owners felt rather more like the frogs in Æsop's fable. In 1854 she was piloted about Venice by Rawdon Brown, an amiable enthusiast, who had gone there in his youth with the intention of staying

a few weeks, but had found the place so fascinating that he remained more than fifty years, and ended his days there. Of an evening, when they went to the Piazza, to listen to the band, and gaze at the moonlight on St. Mark's, Mrs. Norton frequently joined them there, and, says Lady Eastlake, 'I studied her.'

She is a beautiful and gifted woman: her talents are of the highest order, and she has carefully cultivated them—has read deeply, has a fine memory, and wit only to be found in a Sheridan. No one can compare with her in telling a story—so pointed, so happy, and so easy; but she is rather a professed story-teller, and brings them in both in and out of season, and generally egotistically. Still, she has only talents—genius she has nothing of, or of the genius nature—nothing of the simplicity, the pathos, the rapid changes from mirth to emotion. No, she is a perpetual actress, consummately studying and playing her part, and that always the attempt to fascinate—she cares not whom. Occasionally I got her to talk thoughtfully, and then she said things which showed great thought and observation—quite oracular, and not to be forgotten. I felt at first that she would captivate me, but the glamour soon went off.

It is much to be regretted that we have not, as a companion picture to this, a 'study' of Lady Eastlake by Mrs. Norton.

The death of Lockhart, in 1854, was a great blow to her. Not only was he one of the most

interesting men she had ever known, but her whole literary life had been connected with, and, indeed, formed by him. Yet, as she said, the merely literary causes which first led to their acquaintance never formed any special part of their subsequent true and solid friendship. Lockhart has had many hard things said of him; but Lady Eastlake, at any rate, always bore testimony to his unfailing kindness to her, as well as to the intellectual gifts, the sound and true instincts, the upright judgment, the simplicity, and the admiration for genuine worth though in the homeliest garb, which she described as his most prominent characteristics. Lockhart's death made no difference in her relations with the *Quarterly Review*; but from 1854 onwards her principal contributions were on subjects relating to art. Lady Eastlake's work as a critic and historian of art is considerable both in quality and in quantity. In 1846 she contributed to the *Quarterly Review* articles on Modern German Painting and on Cologne Cathedral. In 1854 she translated Waagen's valuable work on *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, and afterwards reviewed it herself in the *Quarterly*. In 1856 she contributed to the same review a hostile criticism of Ruskin's *Modern Painters*, of which more will have to be said later.

In 1858 appeared the first of her articles on Michael Angelo. In 1860, at the request of Messrs. Longmans and of Mrs. Jameson's representatives, she undertook to complete that lady's unfinished *History of Our Lord in Works of Art*, and in 1864 she reviewed the whole work in the *Quarterly Review*. In 1869 and '70 she edited her husband's *Contributions to the Literature of the Fine Arts*, and added a Memoir of him, which Mr. Cosmo Monkhouse declares to be one of the best short biographies in the language. In 1870 she wrote the *Life of John Gibson, Sculptor*. In 1872 appeared her first article in the *Edinburgh Review*, the subject being Italian Art. In 1874 she revised and remodelled her husband's edition of *Kugler's Handbook of Painting: The Italian Schools*, a task for which Sir Henry Layard (a subsequent editor of the work) declared her to be specially qualified by her exceptional acquaintance with art, and by the additional advantage she had of using the careful notes on pictures and galleries made by her husband during his visits to Italy as Director of the National Gallery. This Handbook, as revised and remodelled by her, remained the standard work on the subject until the appearance of Morelli's revolutionary work on the Italian

Masters rendered further revision necessary in 1887. In 1875, '76, '78, and '79 she contributed to the *Edinburgh Review* articles on Leonardo da Vinci, Thorwaldsen, Michael Angelo, Titian, and Raphael, which, slightly revised, and with one on Albert Dürer from the *Quarterly* substituted for that on Thorwaldsen, were republished in two volumes in 1883, under the title of *Five Great Painters*. Her last contribution to the literature of art was a eulogistic article on Giovanni Morelli, which appeared in the *Quarterly* in July 1891, when she was in her eighty-second year.

It was in 1856 that she made her attack on *Modern Painters*. It will probably startle many readers of the present generation, who have been brought up to hear the lightest word of 'the Master' quoted with reverence and even awe, to find Lady Eastlake rating and scolding John Ruskin as though he were a presumptuous schoolboy who had not properly learned his lesson. Mr. Ruskin, she says, is a very positive and confident thinker, and any positive man or opinion commands, at least for a time, a certain number of followers, for people naturally trust those who trust themselves. But it is not insignificant that he is most popular with the young and uncritical. He is full

of 'crotchety contradictions and peevish paradoxes.' The qualities which define him as a writer are stated to be 'active thought, brilliant style, wrong reasoning, false statement, and unmannerly language'; in fact, his more recent volumes show him to have arrived at 'a blind rhodomontade of reasoning and a reckless virulence of language almost unparalleled in the annals of literature.' These be strong words; and she sets to work to show some justification for them. Most of his errors, she holds, proceed from certain fundamental fallacies in his general theory; and she declares that it is not true (1) that painting, or art generally, is nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle of thought, but of itself nothing. It is not true (2) that he who has learned what is commonly considered as the whole art of painting—that is, the art of representing any natural object faithfully—has as yet only learned the language by which his thoughts are to be expressed. It is not true (3) that a picture which has the nobler and more numerous ideas, however awkwardly expressed, is necessarily a greater and better picture than that which has the less noble or the less numerous ideas, however beautifully expressed. And, having demolished these 'funda-

mental fallacies,' to her own satisfaction at any rate, she goes on to deal with certain particular errors to which they lead up in the course of the book. The first two volumes of *Modern Painters* were alleged to have been written for the express purpose of defending Turner. But, seeing that this great painter received while living the unfeigned and unstinted admiration of every British artist worthy the name, together with a popular appreciation which enabled him to be fastidious as to those from whom he would receive commissions, and to leave a larger fortune than any other English painter had ever accumulated, such a defence appeared to be totally unnecessary. 'We have always looked upon Turner,' she declares, 'even before Mr. Ruskin was born, as one of the greatest landscape-painters in the world.' But, even had he needed any defence, in order to glorify him, it was surely not necessary to vilify Claude, Poussin, Canaletto, Cuyp, Hobbima, Ruysdael, and other names which stand higher still. She next considers in detail, and endeavours to refute, 'some of those empty assertions without which Mr. Ruskin would be at a loss to carry on that system of contradiction to all received opinion, which is the only consistent thing in his writings.' Then, after a

discussion of Raphael's principles and practice, and a defence of his symbolical method of representation as exhibited in the cartoons, she passes to Mr. Ruskin's 'Notes' on that year's Royal Academy pictures, and roundly charges him with making a false statement about the reflection of light from the jewels of a coronet in Herbert's picture of 'Lear and Cordelia.' Ruskin had not minced his words in speaking of Herbert, and neither does she in retorting on his critic. In the first place, the fact is not as Mr. Ruskin has alleged; in the second place, even granting, for the sake of argument, that Herbert had erred in the high light of a jewel, what would that prove?

A picture is not a culprit to be cross-examined and detected by a trap here and a slip there. Mr. Ruskin's ideas of truth and falsehood as applied to art (all traceable to his false start as to the nature and purposes of art) are utterly futile and nonsensical. Falsehood only becomes such when there is the power in the deceiver to pervert the truth, or in the deceived to believe the lie. Now, a man may paint grass red, but in the first place he could not conceal that he had not made it green; in the next place nobody would believe it to be green; and, finally and chiefly, he would be no painter to do such a thing at all. Of such blunders as a real painter, from oversight or inadvertence, may make, a picture may be full and yet not a whit the worse for it, or from everything of the kind it

may be scrupulously free and yet an untrue and wretched daub. Raphael's frescoes in the Vatican would furnish a rich harvest of little inaccuracies to such wretched spies and informers, while no painter was more fallible in such matters than Turner, who once even painted the sun on the north side. It is not therefore the man who makes a blunder *in* a picture, but he who makes a false statement *about* a picture, who is the real offender.

And she sums up the whole matter by declaring that 'if we separate what is really to be thought and said about art from false assumption, futile speculation, contradictory argument, crotchety views, and romantic rubbish, ninety-nine hundredths of what Mr. Ruskin writes, and one-half of what most write, will fall to the ground. The present writer may perhaps be permitted to congratulate himself that he is not now called upon to compose the feud between these two equally positive and dogmatic critics of art.

Another *Quarterly* article in which Lady Eastlake is supposed by many people to have ruined her reputation for critical sagacity is that on *Vanity Fair* and *Jane Eyre*, which appeared in 1848. But what she really did say on this subject is not always quite accurately remembered. She said that *Jane Eyre* was a very remarkable book,

and equal in popularity with *Vanity Fair*. Some of the characters and events in it she admitted to be 'masterly in conception.' And she pointed out that in the later chapters there were 'wonderful things':—

Scenes of suppressed feeling, more fearful to witness than the most violent tornadoes of passion—struggles with such intense sorrow and suffering as it is sufficient misery to know that any one should have conceived, far less passed through; and yet with that stamp of truth which takes precedence in the human heart before actual experience. The flippant, fifth-rate plebeian actress has vanished, and only a noble, high-souled woman, bound to us by the reality of her sorrow, and yet raised above us by the strength of her will, stands in actual life before us.

After the discomfiture of Jane's marriage, says the critic, the author has given us 'a splendidly drawn picture of a natural heart, of high power, intense feeling, and fine religious instinct, falling prostrate, but not grovelling, before the tremendous blast of sudden affliction.' But to the earlier part of the book she takes certain objections, and has, in fact, no remembrance of any other which 'combines such genuine power with such horrid taste.' The author, whoever he or she may be, is evidently a person with a total ignorance of the habits of good society, making fine ladies of the world talk together and

bully the servants like *parvenues* trying to show off—and so forth. Up to this point there does not appear to be anything which anybody but the most infatuated Brontë-worshipper need cry out about. Moreover, when it is further declared that the author has also committed the highest moral offence a novel-writer can commit—that, namely, of making an unworthy character interesting in the eyes of the reader—both the principle and the particular application of it are surely fair matters for argument. And it is rather beside the mark for Brontë-worshippers to urge that the charging of the author of *Jane Eyre* with the exhibition of ‘grossness of taste and a heathenish doctrine of religion’ in her book was absurd merely because Charlotte Brontë was the daughter of a country clergyman, born and bred in the atmosphere of a parsonage; for even Mrs. Gaskell admits some parts of the book to be coarse; and we now know that the atmosphere of that lonely Hawarth parsonage was impregnated far less with the spirit of Christianity than with the spirit of pagan (or ‘heathen’) stoicism. It must be remembered also that our estimate of what is proper or improper in a novel has materially changed since 1848. Our circulating libraries now teem with erotic and agnostic

stories which then would not have been admitted into any respectable household. And Lady Eastlake, who, as Mr. Lang observes, was a writer of stern propriety, naturally took objection to what appeared to her an offence against the established custom, or prejudice, of her time. On one point, however, the critic must be admitted to have gone entirely wrong. There had been various rumours as to the authorship of *Jane Eyre*; and the conjecture of the *Quarterly* reviewer is a capital instance of one of the pitfalls which beset the psychological method of criticism. On the ground that 'no woman makes mistakes in her own *métier*,' while the author of *Jane Eyre* certainly exhibited a total ignorance of certain culinary matters and of the details of female dress, Lady Eastlake unhesitatingly pronounced that author to be a man. This was merely a bad shot. But she unfortunately added that, supposing these incongruities to have been purposely assumed in order to disguise a female pen, there would be no alternative but to ascribe the book to one who had 'for some sufficient reason forfeited the society of her own sex.' This may perhaps appear unpardonable; but it is a curious fact that Charles Kingsley long afterwards acknowledged to Mrs. Gaskell that if he had written about the book at the time he would

probably have expressed a similar opinion. It has been reported that Lady Eastlake showed a further want of insight by also conjecturing Currer, Acton, and Ellis Bell to be three 'brothers of the weaving order in some Lancashire town.' But this is an error. Lockhart wrote to her saying that a report to this effect had reached him; but she took no notice of it.

It would perhaps be too much to say that Lady Eastlake subscribed to Dr. Johnson's opinion that all foreigners are fools; but certainly foreigners were not general favourites with her; and few continental countries or cities greatly pleased her, with the exception of her ever-beloved Venice. Thackeray, she said, had almost disarmed criticism of Becky Sharp by making her mother a Frenchwoman: 'France is the land for the real Syren, with the woman's face and the dragon's claws.' Of the Salon in 1861 she wrote:—

Dozens of magnificent rooms and miles of wall are hung with abominations . . . hardly a picture there would have been admitted into our exhibition. . . . One such exhibition as this in Paris goes far to ruin art for half a generation; and truly the subjects are so odious—mere frippery, vicious boudoir scenes, or things of refined cruelty or undisguised indecency—that they tell a terrible tale for the people who can delight in them.

Germany and the Germans fared no better at her hands. Hanover, for instance, is 'a frightful place'; and although she admits Nuremberg to be exceedingly picturesque, and its old castle delightful, she quite grudges it to 'people so utterly devoid of all sense of it as the Bavarian line of lubbers.' Her only reminiscence of Mannheim is that

in the next room to ours at the inn a few Germans were spending the evening in social, innocent converse, and the yelling and roaring increased as the night wore on. The singing grew more and more drunkenly out of tune, and glasses were smashed and noises made, which I can hardly imagine in England, even in the lowest public-house, without the police interfering. The only difference was that the piano was beautifully played, and as that did not get drunk, its tones remained true all night through. We got to sleep about 4 A.M.—not because the noise ceased, but in spite of it—and heard afterwards that *die Herren* had never been to bed at all, and probably would not for a week.

German people generally, she says, 'have not yet arrived at the art of conversing and eating at the same time: they can talk with their mouths full, and make a noise, but they never converse. Their playfulness is 'of the cart-horse kind'; and their literature (not even excluding the works of the great Goethe) exhibits only 'strange extremes of power and puerility.' The successes of the

Germans in the war of 1870 by no means altered her opinion of them; and she protested against 'the risk of exalting them to the skies now because they are successful, just as the ex-Emperor was exalted while believed to be the same.' Writing from Madrid in October 1879, she wondered what could induce people (except such as doted on pictures) to come to Spain. Other cities might possibly account for the charm some travellers attribute to the country, but certainly not Madrid. And the whole land, in her view, was 'a stern, barren, hungry country, torn with storms—with a half-starved population, man and beast.' Her husband's man-servant reported that he had been to a bull-fight, and seen four bulls and ten horses killed, in presence of 11,000 people, including many of the highest ladies of the land; whereupon she observes, 'They are a ferocious and frivolous people, and show their decline as the ancient Romans did, directly they began to be such cowards as to delight in seeing the danger and sufferings of others without sharing them.' Even Rome disappointed her in many respects; and she congratulates herself that she had studied and appreciated Michael Angelo's fine personal character before she set eyes on St. Peter's. The dome, she admits, must be admired

by all; but the principal façade looks more like that of a club-house than a church; and although the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is certainly grand, the vaunted 'Last Judgment' is a mere 'daub.' Of Russia her general impression seems to have been that the peasantry were excessively ignorant, and the Government simply abominable. A passage in one of her letters, apropos of the assassination of the Czar Alexander II. in 1881, may at the present moment (1905) be read with special interest:—

These old despotisms cannot stand the light of the present day, and one wonders that any man in his senses should undertake them. No man can really feel himself able to rule over 80 millions of people, or over one million. A Czar who would start with only one-tenth of the present useless army, one-tenth of the wretched 'chinvoniks' (common officials), and no secret police, might have a chance of dying in his bed.

In 1865 her husband died at Pisa, after a lingering illness of several months' duration; and when the first extremity of her grief was over, her friend Sir Henry Layard encouraged her to add a Memoir of Sir Charles Eastlake to his *Contributions to the Literature of the Fine Arts*, which she collected and edited, and also to undertake the Life of John Gibson, the sculptor. During the first few years

of her bereavement she appears to have lived in retirement; but in 1870 she had the honour to meet Queen Victoria at the Deanery, Westminster, when Froude, Tyndall, Lecky, and other literary and scientific notabilities were of the party, and when the Queen made some very gracious remarks about the Memoir of Sir Charles, which she had just been reading. About the same time, she attended a lecture by Mr. Ruskin at the Royal Institution; and the old antagonism flames out in her account of it:—

He was so much in request that above 300 persons were turned away from the door. I have little doubt that these consisted mainly of young ladies, who were his great supporters within. Before the lecture began, he went about beamingly among their ranks, and parts of the lecture were graciously suited to their comprehension; some parts of it were beyond mine; but upon the whole it was a brilliant ridiculous, and interesting performance.

It was from this date that she became more and more intimate with the Grotes. She had first met Mrs. Grote in 1854, at a dinner-party at the Murchison's, and then wrote to her mother that, considering Mrs. Grote eschews all stupid women, and declares she seldom meets with a sensible one, it is certainly a compliment that 'the cleverest woman in London, only of masculine and not feminine character,' has

made up to her. In 1870 she stayed with the Grotes for some time at their house at Shere; and a little later, when staying with them at an inn at Chatsworth, she writes to her friend Layard: 'I am always astonished at the richness and variety of Mrs. Grote's gifts, which I admire the more from her soundness of mind. Her society is a perpetual feast to me.' And so it remained to the end; and when Mrs. Grote died at the age of eighty-six, Lady Eastlake said: 'I can have no higher ambition than to live as wisely and as well as she did.' It might have been expected that a woman in her seventieth year would have been more inclined to speak of her own life also in the past tense; but Lady Eastlake was still vigorous, with fifteen years of life before her; and she was after this date able to produce a Memoir of her friend, a translation of Professor Brandl's *Coleridge and the Romantic School*, and about a dozen more articles for the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh Reviews*. Two or three years later, however, we begin to hear of rheumatic troubles, which restrict her powers of locomotion, and involve a loneliness which inclines her to become somewhat too pensive. But she finds a definite object of occupation, and a definite subject to read about and

think over, a great resource and comfort. At the same time, there were two things which she greatly missed—the picture exhibitions, and ‘nice dinner-parties.’ Complaining of the loss of these, she once exclaimed: ‘I think everybody should die or be killed off at seventy; by that time we have had enough of life, and people are getting tired of us.’ She did manage, however, to go to the Rossetti Exhibition in Saville Row in February 1883; and in a letter to her nephew expressed the following uncompromising judgment upon it:—

If you care for my opinion, it is that the pictures are *horrors*. Layard calls them ‘women with cadaverous bodies and sensual mouths.’ I say, that part look as if they were going to be hanged, wringing their hands and poking out their chins; and others look as if they had been hanged, and were partially decomposed. It is disgraceful to hear so much nonsense talked by people who know nothing of art; but it is exactly those who are most presumptuous. People don’t talk law to lawyers, or medicine to doctors, but their conceit about art is incredible.

The editor of her *Letters and Journals* ventures to hint that the foregoing opinion may ‘perhaps be regarded as heretical.’ There was not the slightest need for him to apologise. Heretical opinions are by no means always sound opinions, but they are invariably more interesting than com-

placent orthodoxy; and they are usually the most significant indications of the writer's character. Moreover, the foregoing heresy is far from being the only one to which she gave forcible expression. Only a couple of pages previously, for instance, the editor prints a letter in which she says that, having been invited to join a Society 'for doing Mr. Browning posthumous honours in his lifetime,' she has pleaded too great stupidity and been excused; adding, 'Dryden, Milton, and Pope are, I understand, quite commonplace in comparison.' She liked Browning personally; but his works were another matter; and on hearing of his death her only comment was: 'He had a peculiar set of readers, who adored him. . . . There are always peculiar admirers for peculiar writers, painters, clergymen, etc.' Writing to Layard in 1891, she remarks: 'I agree with you about Tolstoi. There is a great difference between dirty and clean dirt—his is indefensibly dirty.' Anything of a morbid tendency was an abomination to her; and when literary England was going into raptures over Marie Bashkirtseff's *Journal*, she declared:—

I have now waded through 300 pages, and am ready to pronounce it the most detestable and unhealthy rubbish I ever read—very like what I have known of Russian school-

girls in the schoolroom. Some fashionable ladies have gone wild over it as an interesting 'psychological emanation'—psychological fiddlestick!

Lady Eastlake's political opinions were in the main of the conventional Tory type; but she was not remarkable for her consistency. She disapproved of Board Schools, and of compulsory and gratuitous education. But she advocated the higher education for women—though 'not for itself, but for the bread and cheese purposes to which it can be turned.' Seeing that we have a majority of women, and polygamy disallowed, she thought that women (*i.e.* women of the middle and higher classes, who alone came within her purview) should have some means of helping themselves. As an alternative, she suggests that every single gentleman should maintain a single lady, and every widower a widow—but she admits certain obvious difficulties in the way of carrying out that idea. As to the franchise, she did not care about it for herself, but seeing the existing qualification to be really a property—and not a sex—qualification, she maintained that a woman who could hold property should also have a vote. Up to 1879, in common with the bulk of her party, she was a Free Trader; and in an

excellent article on the French economist Bastiat in the *Edinburgh Review* of that year she not only nailed her Free Trade colours to the mast, but did not affect to conceal her contempt for the reasoning powers of the few existing heretics who still held to the tradition of an exploded Protectionism. But in 1887 she was converted by the arguments of the 'Fair Traders,' being rather unaccountably elated by Sir E. Sullivan's 'axiom' that 'cheap living and low prices are no sign of prosperity.' The reason she gives for her opposition to the Sugar Bounties, however — 'I am not a great consumer of jam, so am all for retaliatory duties on beet sugar' — scarcely indicates that she had studied the matter from the point of view of public policy and popular well-being. When the Czar was assassinated in 1881, even that lamentable crime did not blind her to the underlying cause, and she saw clearly that one man singly could not rule over millions. But when, in the same year, Ireland gave the English executive some trouble by agitating for Home Rule, she exclaimed: 'I wish Bismarck had the governing of Ireland.' Even Bismarck, however, could not always remain in her good graces, for in 1889 she declared: 'I should like

to toss Herbert Bismarck and Herbert Gladstone in one blanket, and the two Papas in another.' Perhaps none of all this is to be taken too seriously. And, in any case, as was remarked at the outset of this sketch, Lady Eastlake was an expert in art, but only an amateur in politics. She continued, however, to maintain a keen interest in political, as well as in social, literary, and artistic questions; and her memory remained bright, and her conversation full of vivacity and charm to the end. She passed away peacefully, in her sleep, on October 3, 1893, when within a few weeks of the age of eighty-four.

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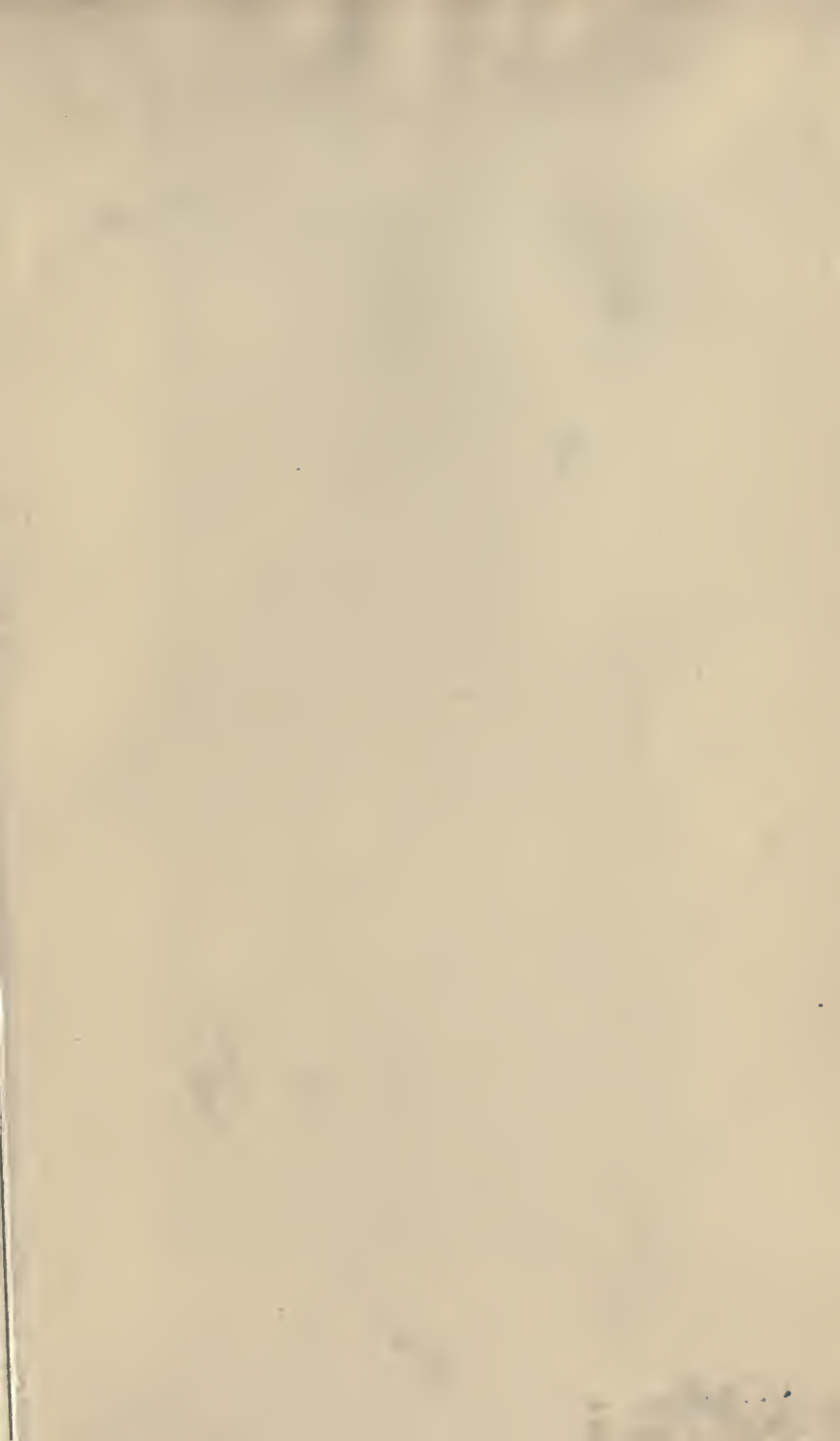
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